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THE THREE KINGS.

The Fatherland Series.

The Three Kings.

From the German.

PHILADELPHIA:
LUTHERAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION.
1871.

The Three Kings.

Translated from the German

OF GUSTAV NIERITZ.

BY

REBECCA H. SCHIVELY.

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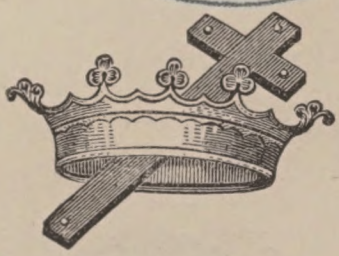

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

THE SACRIFICE 9

CHAPTER II.

THE GREEK AND THE ISRAELITE 26

CHAPTER III.

THE KING'S DAUGHTER 38

CHAPTER IV.

THE HEBREW'S LESSONS 55

CHAPTER V.

A DISAGREEABLE SURPRISE 69

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE WAY 93

CHAPTER VII.

PAGE
An Oriental City 116

CHAPTER VIII.

Astrology 135

CHAPTER IX.

The Attack 150

CHAPTER X.

The Land of Judæa 163

CHAPTER XI.

Bethlehem 184

CHAPTER XII.

A Glimpse of the Future 201

THE THREE KINGS.

CHAPTER I.

THE SACRIFICE.

AT the time when the emperor Augustus reigned over the vast empire of Rome, all was dark and wild in the German Fatherland. Dense, gloomy forests covered the ground, and numberless marshes loaded the air with noxious vapors, while the night of ignorance and superstition brooded upon the souls of the people. Long after the Greeks and Romans had created those marvels of sculpture and architecture which the world ever regards with admiration, the

Germans still dwelt within the shades of their almost impenetrable woods, or in the rudest of huts. While the former were leading a life of luxury and refinement, the latter were still subsisting on the flesh of beasts killed in the chase, on the milk of their cattle, and on acorns and the juice of barley and wheat. Far back to those times of rugged, untutored physical strength our story would lead the young reader.

Night lay dark upon the oak and beech forests of Germany; for if the bright, piercing rays of the sun failed to gain admittance through that leafy roof by day, how much less could the mild radiance of the moon and stars enter there! Still as the grave was the repose beneath the vaulted canopy of boughs. Men and beasts slept; if a slight rustling sound was now and then heard, it was but the flight of the night-owl,

whose eyes gleamed through the darkness like two rolling balls of fire.

It might have been about midnight, when a faint gleam of light appeared between the gigantic trunks of the mighty oaks. The clustering leaves of the trees glittered like emeralds, and the light gray trunks of the beeches resembled the stone pillars of a temple, as the yellowish glare of a torch fell upon them. The torch was carried by a man who advanced with slow steps through the labyrinth of the wood, directing his way toward a place which, though cleared of trees, was none the less shaded by the boughs of the gigantic oaks that surrounded it. The simple dress of this man scarcely reached to his knees, and was confined at the waist by a girdle of raw-hide. Departing from the German custom, he wore sandals bound to his feet by leathern thongs. His head, with its thick black hair, was un-

covered, as well as his neck and the upper part of his chest. His countenance, revealed in sharp lines by the light of the torch, wore an expression of bitterness and hatred.

"It is Perinthes," he said aloud, as he passed several men armed with heavy clubs, who were lying among the sweet-broom, and who raised their heads slightly and regarded him, as he passed, with watchful and observant eyes. "It is Perinthes, on his way to sharpen the knives for the sacrifice."

These words he spoke in German; but as he passed on, he muttered in Greek: "Oh, that all these pale-faced, red-haired, weak-eyed sea-calves had but one neck, or but one heart, that, with a single blow, I might thrust them forever out of my sight! Ah, Perinthes! who could have foretold this fate for thee three years ago? Where is thy marble palace, with its fair colonnades?

where thy host of slaves? where thy table, with its delicate viands, its sparkling wines? where the soft carpets and the silken curtains? where are thy silver and thy gold? where the warm sunlight, the sweet fruits of thy native land? O Perinthes! basest slave of the despicable barbarian! the miserable food of swine is thy luxury; thy couch is the chill, damp earth; thy clothing, that of a beggar; and thy gnawing anguish is that thou art powerless to avenge thyself on these German beasts!"

Muttering thus, he raised his torch that its light might fall upon two rows of men, bound hand and foot, lying with closed eyes, apparently in profound sleep.

"And I am to whet the knives for your throats?" he continued, with a mocking smile of malice. "Well, I do it so much the more willingly, that you too belong to these barbarian hordes. They sleep!" he

continued, "and yet this night is their last! They are to be sacrificed in honor of the sun and the moon, and Tuisco, the son of the earth! In these woods can be seen as little of any one of these gods as of the others. Stupid savages, that know not even how to make images of their deities! O ye, *my* gods! have pity on your unhappy earthly son! Jupiter, Thunderer! where are thy lightnings, that might destroy these Germans, and set me free? Chaste Diana! dost thou fear to tread these damp and gloomy forests? Winged Mercury! hasten hither, and bring me messages of consolation from my home! Come, vine-crowned Bacchus! transport me by thy gifts, that I may drink relief from my sorrows, and be glad once more! But what do I see? Is not that man of my own flesh and blood? His clustering black hair, his flowing beard, his dark complexion — ha! he raises his

dark bright eyes and fixes them upon me! Speak, good friend; art thou not too a Greek? Oh, say that thou art; let me have at least this one consolation!"

"I am an Israelite," replied the prisoner, with some difficulty making himself intelligible in Greek.

"Oh, woe!" exclaimed Perinthes, in a tone of chagrin. "A Hebrew! a being without gods!"

"'The Lord, our God, is one God,'" said the Israelite, with earnest emphasis.

"Where is He, this God of thine?" asked Perinthes, mockingly! "He does not appear to concern himself much about thee."

A sharp whistle from one of the German guards interrupted the two men in their conversation. Perinthes, muttering wrathfully in his beard, went on his way and disappeared through the entrance to a cave in the rocks, the interior of which, when illu-

mined by his torch, looked from without like an immense furnace of fire.

The night passed away without further incident, and an uncertain glimmer of dawn spreading through the forest, ushered in the day appointed for the sacrifice. The space in front of the cave was soon filled by a band of Germans, who, forming a semicircle, left sufficient room for the performance of the fearful ceremony. Priests, with long flowing hair and beards, and in white robes, appeared, and removed the chains from the hands of the captives, that they might take their last earthly meal. They partook of it seated and in silent stupefaction; only the Israelite refused, by a gesture, the proffered acorns. And now the throng of people separated to afford passage for a double line of soldiers, led by their king, Baldasser.

But this king neither wore a golden crown on his reddish-yellow hair, nor bore any

sceptre or other symbol of royalty in his hand. Instead of an ermine mantle, a shaggy bear-skin hung from his shoulders, and his bare, brawny chest displayed neither star nor badge of rank. But his right hand grasped the stout shaft of a long lance, and in the girdle which confined his linen garment hung a mighty battle-axe, the head of which was formed not of iron, but of granite. This king, a man not yet forty years of age, was distinguished from his followers only by his larger and better proportioned figure and more dignified bearing. His golden hair flowed in long waving locks from his high forehead, and his frank blue eyes looked out from his countenance — clear, white, and rosy as it was — tenderly as the forget-me-not beside the meadow brook.

As he passed between the two files of soldiers, who halted respectfully on each side of him, looking at the same time more like

his younger brothers than his dependants, each of them saluted him by laying the right hand on the heart, the spring of life, while the left pressed the lance more closely to the person. Thus placed, they looked like living though silent walls, a surer defence for their king than those of a stone fortress. Immediately after Baldasser had taken his stand near the mouth of the cave, the lines once more opened to admit four German maidens, accompanied by some old women, and bearing a rude litter, on which lay a young girl, half reclining upon soft furs. This was Baldasser's only, and therefore doubly beloved, daughter, the legacy of his early departed wife.

But the king's daughter was not like other German children, who grew up active as young deer and with strength like that of the oak-tree. She seemed like a tender pale blossom reared in the dark or in enervating

heat. The superstitious and the priests believed the child was bewitched, and it was particularly on her account that the sacrifice appointed for this day was to be offered to the gods. To appease the sun, the moon, the earth, and Teut, the son of the earth, that they might no longer withhold their blessings from the young princess, man's blood must be shed.

Baldasser cast upon his child a glance full of anxious paternal love, and then gave his whole attention to the priests, who now came forth, muttering prayers, from the cavern, and approached their victims. There, where the rising sun sent a single lightning-like ray between the trunks of the gigantic oaks into the darkness of the sacred place, the sacrifice destined for him was placed. The offering for the moon was disposed just beneath where she stood, pale and spirit-like, looking down through the shimmer of fo-

liage. That destined for the earth, and her son, Teut, was beside a freshly dug pit, which was to receive the warm blood of real, not imaginary, children of earth.

Erna, the daughter of Baldasser, looked timidly at the victims that stood nearest her awaiting their inevitable fate with bowed heads, and then cast down her deep-blue eyes covered with their long lashes.

At the moment when the priests seized with one hand the victim, with the other their sharp granite knives, the air was filled with the discordant sound of four bull's horns, blown with all the power of German lungs, and so violently that the cheeks of the horn-blowers seemed as if they would burst. And at the same moment the whole assembly united, as with one voice, in a chorus to the gods, praying them graciously to accept the offering.

Such are the artifices which in all times

have been practised by heathen priests upon the people, in order to smother the voice of nature, the cry of anguish, the deep groan, the death-rattle of the human victim. In spite of all the noise, however, some cries of anguish seemed to reach Erna's ears; for more than once a chilling shudder visibly shook her frame.

The horns were silent for an instant, the chorus ceased, and through the sudden stillness were heard these words, slowly and solemnly uttered:

"Jehovah! Jehovah! Lord our God! if I have but Thee, I ask no more in heaven or on earth! Though my flesh and my heart fail me, yet art Thou, O Jehovah! my soul's trust and portion for evermore! Thou, Lord, art with me; therefore will I not fear! What can man do unto me, O Jehovah!

Erna suddenly raised her eyes, and saw, close by the pit, a foreign-looking man, who,

kneeling with his arms outstretched toward the sky, had uttered these words in an unknown tongue.

At a sign from Baldasser, the priests withheld their knives already raised over the Israelite's head, while the king turned to Perinthes, who was standing near, and said:

"Dost thou understand, slave, what the stranger says?"

"Oh, yes, my lord!" replied the wily Greek. "He is of the Hebrew nation, and he is cursing thy daughter, because, as he has heard, this sacrifice is offered on her account. As he acknowledged to me last night, he was a powerful magician among his own people, and therefore—ha! see, my lord, how quickly the curse of the Hebrew has been fulfilled upon thy child!"

A fainting-fit, against which Erna was vainly contending, was, however, the result of the bloody scene, so heart-rending to a

frail and sensitive child, rather than of the Israelite's solemn prayer; the impression made by the latter was but the last of many terrible and mysterious sensations. Fainting-fits, now so common, were in those days so rare among the Germans, and so inexplicable to them, that, with other nervous affections, they were always ascribed to the influence of evil spells. When, therefore, Baldasser saw his daughter's countenance convulsed and quivering, he said hastily to the Greek:

"Oh, Perinthes, entreat the stranger to remove his curse from my child!"

"And what wilt thou offer him as a reward for so doing, my lord?" said the Greek. "I know of but one recompense which would induce him to obey thy wish, the gift of his life."

"Be it so!" replied the king, making again a sign with his hand, that the priests

should not harm the Israelite: this sign they obeyed, not yet having learned to exalt their will above that of the ruler.

Perinthes addressed the Israelite in Greek:

"Listen! Although thou art but a superstitious Hebrew, I have pleaded thy cause, and obtained of this savage and superstitious king, thy release from death. I hope thou wilt be duly grateful to me in the future, for this service."

Although the Israelite could not understand all that Perinthes said to him, he gathered the sense of his words from the accompanying circumstances; and yet, instead of immediately thanking the Greek for his pretended intercession, he raised his hands again toward Heaven, saying:

"Jehovah, Thou art the one God, the Helper, — the one Lord, the Deliverer from death! Praised be Thy mighty name! Selah!"

"He recalls his curse from thy daughter's head, O king!" said the Greek to Baldasser; "and, behold! already Erna is recovering! If only thy gods were as swift in giving relief, as the magic of our happy Eastern countries!"

Baldasser acted as if he had not heard the last remark of the Greek, occupying himself entirely in care for his child, who was now carried from the place. Ere long, the spot consecrated to sacrifice was as silent as it had been through the night. Perinthes followed the retiring Germans, accompanied by the released Israelite, to whom, with a triumphant smile, he was endeavoring to explain his influential position with the king.

CHAPTER II.

THE GREEK AND THE ISRAELITE.

ON the evening of the same day, the Israelite and the Greek were seated together under a majestic oak, which stretched its great, knotty branches far up into the moonlit air, as if to seize the golden disc of the moon itself. A rude hut, built of rough wood, and roofed with turf, was supported against the mighty trunk. A low opening formed the entrance, and a broad board which lay near it, the door, intended only to prevent wild beasts from intruding by night.

"By the Styx," exclaimed Perinthes to his companion, "had it not been for me, thou wouldst never again have looked the moon

in the face. The sword hung over thy head, suspended by a single hair. Why did I avert it from thee? Because a common misfortune has brought us together; and because two men can effect more than one. All our efforts must be directed toward freeing ourselves from this wretched slavery. To venture alone out of these endless woods, in search of my home, — to encounter savage beasts single-handed, would be impossible for me. But in company with thee, my courage will be redoubled, as well as my hopes of success. Even thou, good Esaias," Perinthes continued, with a satirical smile, "must certainly find it hard to content thyself with these delicious pomegranates — these sweet figs and grapes! There," pushing a heap of acorns toward the Hebrew, "didst thou ever eat more juicy dates? Ah!" and the Greek sighed, "in this miserable Germany all is miserable! What a pitiful

king is this Baldasser? My slaves at home are better clad than he. And what thinkest thou of his palace? No boor, in our country, would live in such a dog-kennel as is his royal residence."

"O thou glorious city of Zion!" exclaimed the Israelite, forgetting himself for a moment. "O thou majestic temple at Jerusalem!"

Perinthes smiled compassionately.

"It is easy to see that thou hast never been in Greece, hast never seen the temple of the goddess Diana at Ephesus," he said, disparagingly. "A single column of Grecian workmanship surpasses all the temples of the Hebrews."

"We have but one temple," answered Esaias, warmly, "as we acknowledge but one deity — the only true God."

"Ye poor people!" ejaculated Perinthes, shrugging his shoulders. "But to return to

our German master, who, when he is not hunting or fighting, is taking his repose on filthy bear-skins. O barbarians, who know no enjoyment but to gnaw hard acorns, to tear half raw flesh with your teeth, to gorge yourselves with a sour drink of water and wheat or barley, and then to lie idle! Ye gods! how can ye look down from Olympus upon such savages, without destroying them with your lightnings and thunderbolts, as once ye destroyed the heaven-defying Titans?"

In his excitement Perinthes failed to observe that every time he called upon his gods, a shade passed over the countenance of the Israelite, who shrank from him as if in aversion.

"And these brutish creatures must I serve — *I*, Perinthes, whose house was the most splendid in Ephesus, excepting only

the temple of Diana! Alas, my deplorable fate!"

"How camest thou into the power of the rude Germans?" inquired Esaias of the Greek. "I was taken prisoner by them when they surprised a Roman camp at Maguntia, where I was staying for a short time in order to transact some business."

"And I," said Perinthes, "I had ventured in a vessel of my own up the Danube River, in order to visit a country as yet almost unexplored, and to discover new sources of wealth. My ship was shattered by treacherous rocks beneath the surface of the water. A horde of savage barbarians seized us just as we had succeeded, by swimming, in reaching the shore. I found myself separated from my companions; I was passed as a slave from one people to another, until at last this German king, supposing me to be a doctor who could heal his daughter, ob-

tained me, by an exchange, for himself. I did not undeceive him; if I had done so, I should most probably have been sacrificed to Teut. I have been obliged to learn the speech of these savages, which is bitter as gall to my Grecian tongue. It seems to me wonderful that I am still alive; for, O Hebrew! two winters have I passed in this land accursed by the gods! With such inhabitants, with its wild beasts, its bitter acorns, its countless marshes, its chilling mists, deep snows, and icy frosts, it seems less endurable to me than Tartarus with all its torments."

"Art thou skilled in healing diseases?" asked Esaias. "Art thou truly a physician?"

"Aye, truly!" replied Perinthes, laughing, "as much like one as a field-horse is like Pegasus! I do what I can, and am very thankful when Erna grows neither better nor worse. Her father has, indeed, prom-

ised me freedom as a reward for the cure of his daughter. I do not trust his promise; I fear rather that, when he no longer needs me, he will sacrifice me as a thank-offering to his gods."

"Among the Romans there is a saying that the barbarians hold their promises sacred," rejoined Esaias.

"I trust the Germans neither more nor less than I do the Romans," said Perinthes; "and I should think that you Hebrews could bear testimony to Roman faithlessness."

A deep sigh was the answer of the Israelite. He remembered, in silent sorrow, how his people, the chosen of the Lord, had become tributary to the Romans, who, under the pretext of protecting the Israelites from their enemies, had overrun their country with foreign legions, and impoverished it through exacting tax-gatherers.

"Our first and greatest care must be this,"

Perinthes continued, "to prepare everything for our successful flight, which, if I do not die in the meantime, must be accomplished before winter sets in. We are here, it is true, allowed to go wherever we please; but any attempt to flee from this place would, if discovered, bring inevitable death upon us. And it will be very difficult to find a way through the labyrinths of these woods, by which we may avoid meeting other barbarous tribes, and reach our destination in safety. Some pretext, some means for this end, let us, my good companion in misfortune, tax all our ingenuity to find. I do not fear that thou wilt differ from me; for so surely as my intercession has saved thy life, could my counsel procure thy immediate death. But, friend Hebrew, why dost thou not partake of this venison? It is tolerably well cooked, and is certainly more tempting

to our spoiled palates than this swines' food of acorns."

"The faith of my fathers forbids me to indulge in meats so prepared," said Esaias, deprecatingly.

Perinthes cast a glance of contemptuous pity upon his companion, and then said, "I must recover to-night the sleep I was obliged to lose last night; is not that also thy wish? Let us creep into our sleeping-chamber, which rivals that of a Lucullus or a Sardanapalus in luxury and splendor. We shall slip behind the golden door of our marble palace," he said, mockingly designating the rude board lying at the entrance to the hut, "and leave our numerous guards to keep watch over it."

"It is well for thee that thou canst jest with thy misfortunes," replied Esaias; "for me it is impossible. And thou must pardon me if I do not follow thee into the hut pro-

vided for us. Before I go to rest, I have a solemn duty to fulfil."

"If it concerns only thy superstitions, I have nothing against it," replied Perinthes, yawning; "otherwise, I might protest."

"I have to thank my God," said Esaias, "who has this day delivered me, as once did He the prophet Daniel from the hungry lions. Our holy Scriptures say, 'Offer thanks unto God, and pay thy vows unto the Most High.'"

"What hast thou to offer to thy God, thou poor fool?" returned Perinthes, scornfully. "Not even a libation of wine canst thou pour out before him, much less burn sweet-smelling incense."

"Obedience is better than sacrifice, and a willing heart than the fat of rams," answered Esaias, earnestly.

"Sleep is the best of all at this hour!" exclaimed Perinthes, as he crept into the hut,

closing its entrance from the inside with the board that lay near it.

Esaias on his part, coming out from under the oak, knelt down with his face toward the east, and according to the requirements of his religion, offered his customary thanksgiving to Jehovah. Absorbed in his devotions, he did not perceive that a tall man, at some distance from him, in the shadow of the trees, watched him until he had finished, and turned toward the hut. Before entering it, however, the Israelite paused, and said to himself:

"Is it come to this, that not only must I sleep under the same roof with a Gentile, but I must even share his couch? What a defilement! Beware, Esaias! rather lie exposed to the chill dews of the night!"

Reclining against the trunk of the oak, great exhaustion soon caused him to fall into a profound sleep. On awakening the

next morning, he found himself, to his great surprise, covered to the neck with a warm bear-skin. In vain did he try to conjecture who had done him this kindness; he could not have imagined that it was King Baldasser, who, an unseen witness of the stranger's devotions, had afterwards found him sleeping on the ground, and compassionately covered him with the bear-skin which he took from his own shoulders.

CHAPTER III.

THE KING'S DAUGHTER.

SEVERAL days after, Esaias was conducted to the king's dwelling, which, like those of his subjects, was built of wood, and not larger than ordinary. The trunk of an immense oak occupied the centre of the edifice, and served as its principal support, a circle of slender beech-trees and young oaks forming the enclosure around the dwelling. The doors, as well as the partition-walls of the house, consisted of the skins of beasts sewed together; and as the apartments were without windows, and received only a little glimmer of light from above, the interior was quite dark. The Israelite had stood for some time in it before his eyes

were sufficiently accustomed to the obscurity to distinguish objects.

Gradually, however, he was able to recognize the other persons present. The first upon whom his eyes rested was the king's daughter, Erna, a girl of about eleven years of age, who was suffering from a very singular malady. She was seated upon soft skins spread out on the floor, and was in a state of unusual and unintermitted excitement. Every muscle of her face worked rapidly and painfully, and her arm, raised to an horizontal position, was moving in circles with frightful swiftness. These movements were accompanied alternately by shrill laughter and harsh, discordant singing; at intervals both ceased, and the child began to sob aloud. Sometimes she would spring to her feet, and begin, without leaving her place, to leap and turn with a motion that somewhat resembled dancing.

Baldasser, the tall, kingly warrior, stood silent and motionless beside his child, an expression of the deepest grief upon his noble features. Erna's female attendants formed a group behind the father and daughter, gazing with looks of wonder and sympathy on the afflicted child. In front of her lay, outstretched, a man in white clothing, his face upon the floor, murmuring words of exorcism. It was the German high-priest, whose voice and appearance were but too familiar to the Israelite. Perinthes was scornfully watching this man's proceedings, and glanced significantly at Esaias. Then he said, in a commanding tone:

"Rise, Mamuh, and help me to drive out the evil spirit."

The priest reluctantly arose to obey this command, but cast upon the two foreigners a look of deadly hatred. He and the Greek

now seized Erna's arm with both their hands, that they might forcibly prevent its motion. Their efforts excited the young girl to still greater exertions, in order to free herself from their grasp; but finding that she did not succeed, she burst out in a heart-rending cry, which called an expression of anguish to her father's countenance. For several minutes the child struggled against the superior strength of the two men, but in vain, though they panted from their exertions in wrestling with this young and usually weak creature. Unable longer to endure the torturing scene, Baldasser turned with imploring voice and manner toward Esaias, who was unable to understand the German words addressed to him.

"Esaias!" said Perinthes, "the king needs thy aid! Come, make thy trial as a mighty magician. I am curious to see how thou wilt come out from this dilemma, and

whether the disciple will venture to surpass his master."

For a few seconds Esaias stood in silent perplexity, and then said, firmly:

"Let go the child!"

"I do not need to be twice told to do that!" replied Perinthes, with a satirical smile, making a motion to the high-priest to release Erna's arm from his grasp, as he himself had already done. Wiping the perspiration from his forehead, he watched Esaias still with the same mocking look. The latter approached the sick child, who had sunk on her knees almost exhausted, and laying his left hand on her head, while his right was raised toward the sky, he said, with impressive accent:

"Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us all? Why then should one despise another? O Jehovah! thou God of my fathers, of Abraham, of Isaac,

and of Jacob, have mercy upon this child, although she is not of the seed of Abraham, and free her from the power of Beelzebub, the chief of the devils!"

As if in blessing, Esaias rested his hands upon Erna's head, which was still moving, though not so violently as before. Then he gently passed them over her shoulders and arms, and continued that action for some time. He also took Erna's twitching fingers, and rubbed them gently with his own. Very soon he had the pleasant satisfaction of seeing the violence of her paroxysms decrease, until at last they ceased altogether, and the child fell first into a gentle perspiration, and then into a sound sleep.

The Greek, as well as the priest, had been a silent witness of this scene. Now, however, Perinthes said, contemptuously:

"Dost thou imagine, Hebrew, that by that juggling thou hast really done anything

toward the cure of this barbarian's child? Thou poor fool! we have had opportunities enough to observe the same attacks before. However, I am quite willing to give up my place here to thee, provided that my neck does not become any better acquainted with the stone knives of these savage priests."

Perinthes's character and conduct were not such as to inspire Esaias with any very warm friendship; and these words only served to widen the breach between the two men.

Without answering the Greek, Esaias stood still, as if irresolute, until Baldasser beckoned to him to follow him out of Erna's chamber. The Israelite obeyed, and Baldasser, his face illumined with joy and gratitude, led the way into a large apartment filled with objects many and various. These were, apparently, the booty which the king and his warriors had brought home from their martial expe-

ditions. A second expressive gesture invited the Israelite to select from this repository such a reward as might please him.

Gratitude is a virtue whose value every one can appreciate. This exhibition of it in the German king did not fail to make an agreeable impression upon Esaias. Yet he said to himself, in silent sorrow:

"Alas, what are all treasures, compared with freedom? O Gentile king, how thankful should I be, wouldst thou but permit me to return to my wife and children! For I, like thyself, have a daughter, one of the same age, the joy and comfort of my heart."

His eyes wandered over all the valuable articles around him, until at last they rested upon a kind of stringed instrument, or harp.

"Come," he said, with a kind of melancholy cheerfulness, "thou my friend and comforter in distress! Thou wilt weep and rejoice with me, according as I sweep thy

strings sadly or hopefully. In thy company I may forget the woes of earth, and feel myself nearer to the Lord, and to Heaven."

He took the instrument in his hand, and thanked the king by a look and a gesture. Then he left the king's house, thinking:

"This Gentile ruler appears not to be an evil-disposed man; I see this in his great love for his child, and his ready gratitude to me. It were well, in many respects, if I understood the German tongue. I cannot trust the Greek to interpret faithfully what is said to me. I will try to learn their speech."

Day by day, therefore, Esaias improved his acquaintance with the German people. He studied their manner of living, which was very simple, though comfortable. The women attended to all domestic cares, as well as to the cattle. They spun and wove the flax and hemp, prepared the clothing, sewed the skins together, made mead and

beer, took care of the children, and provided their simple food. Far less industrious were the men. When not engaged in war, or in the chase, they passed their time in idleness, intoxicating themselves with beer, which they drank from the horns of oxen, and amusing themselves by playing games with dice.

Esaias was daily brought to the king's house, to attend Erna. Although the Israelite was a sage and experienced man, he was far from being an accomplished physician. He did not at all understand the nature of Erna's disease. When he bade the priest and the Greek to loose their hold on her arm, he did so because appearances and a correct feeling led him to judge that her condition was rendered worse, rather than improved, by the restraint. The laying on of hands was a custom quite common among the Hebrews, and Esaias had stroked the

sick child with his hands, because he could think of no better way to soothe her, and this was at least an innocent one.

Finding that the friction produced a salutary effect upon the child, he concluded to continue the use of it, and in addition caused her painfully quivering and twitching limbs to be gently rubbed with pieces of woollen cloth. He also turned his attention to her diet. It was not without sufficient reason that the Jewish priests, who were also the physicians of their people, imposed upon them so many and so strict fasts. As many diseases are the result of a want of moderation in eating and drinking, so fasting is an excellent remedy for them. Esaias, therefore, allowed the king's daughter only simple and easily digestible food, with pure water; forbidding all the extracts of vegetables, and the nostrums which Perinthes had prescribed for her.

And finally, as he conjectured, and with good reason, that Erna's disorder had its seat in the blood, he persuaded her father to make her exchange her usual reclining posture upon soft skins in a dark room, for daily exercise in the open, sunny air. He feared, however, that all these means might prove unavailing,—that the child was really possessed with an evil spirit, or perhaps, indeed, with more than one: so he failed not to call the Lord to his aid, and to conjure the evil spirit, by His almighty name, to depart from her.

Erna's condition steadily improved, from week to week, which filled her father with delight, the Israelite with grateful pleasure, and the Greek and the priest with hatred and envy. With dark and sinister countenances the two last-named observed the daily increasing affection of the king and the people for Esaias. The favorable im-

pression the Israelite had made was due, not only to the good he had done Erna, but also to his skilful playing on the harp, and the singing with which he accompanied it.

As a zealous Israelite, Esaias knew by heart many of the finest Psalms of David, which he sang to his harp with great expression, and in a really fine voice. Frequently, when he had retired to some lonely spot in the woods to sing, he found himself, in a short time, surrounded by a circle of Germans, of both sexes and all ages, who listened to him with reverential attention, often entreating him to sing and play longer. He sometimes gave his rude audience the pleasure of hearing his songs, translated into their own language, with which he had now become tolerably familiar.

Upon the sick girl, particularly, his music produced a visible effect; and at every attack of her distressing malady the king sent for

the Israelite, with the request that he would come and banish the evil spirit by his music. At such times, Baldasser himself did not fail to be an attentive listener, and Esaias congratulated himself upon having thus made him acquainted with the glorious Psalms of David.

Thus passed fourteen or fifteen weeks, during which time Esaias had not passed beyond the bounds of the German encampment. Erna's recovery was rapidly progressing, and her physician already anticipated the moment when King Baldasser should give him freedom as his reward; for this promise had been given him, as before to the Greek.

The latter became every day more surly and evil-minded toward the Hebrew.

"How thou makest me regret," he said, one evening, to Esaias, "that I saved thee from the sacrifice! I trusted that I should

find a friend in thee, who would aid me in escaping from this barbarous tribe — instead of which, for four months, I have watched thee act the flatterer and sycophant toward the savage and his daughter. Besides, thou hast supplanted me in Baldasser's favor, and thus rewarded me with ingratitude. The summer, so favorable for our escape, thou hast allowed to pass away, and prevented me from obtaining the means of escape. Thy life is in my hand, — what hinders me, since thou art my enemy, from killing thee?"

"I am not thine enemy," replied Esaias; "I am rather thy true friend. The day will soon come when we shall both be able to leave this camp free, and safe from pursuit and death."

"Poor, credulous fool!" said Perinthes, scornfully. "Know, that as soon as thou art no longer needed here, thou and I will

both be sacrificed to Teut, in gratitude for Erna's recovery. The high-priest told me so in confidence."

"Passion blinds thee, my dear Perinthes," returned Esaias, "else wouldst thou certainly put more confidence in the solemn promise of King Baldasser, than in the words of the high-priest. And, think, would not the king, who through fear of my curse saved me from death, find still greater reason to dread my vengeance, now that, by the help of my God, his daughter is almost entirely cured. Where is thy usual wisdom, Perinthes? Beware of that false priest, who, in order to bring us under his knife, would willingly lay a snare for us."

"And shall I trust thee," rejoined Perinthes, with some bitterness, "thee, who art ever cold and reserved toward me, and becomest, day by day, more familiar and friendly with these barbarians? Why dost

thou so persistently refuse to share the hut where I sleep, and to eat with me? Why dost thou seek the company of the barbarians more frequently than mine?"

"It is the faith of my fathers," answered Esaias, "which obliges me to live separate from others. And in singing and playing for the barbarians, I hope to benefit them by leading them to better thoughts and gentler feelings. It is not I who seek their society, but they mine."

Perinthes was silenced, but still showed by his conduct that he doubted the Israelite's sincerity; and indeed, Esaias had not revealed to him the principal motives of his reserve toward him.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HEBREW'S LESSONS.

IT was on a pleasant evening that the king's daughter, Erna, was returning to her home, accompanied by her playmates and attendants, across the fields and through the woods. Baldasser and Esaias followed them. The king looked with joy and affection at his child, who, with firm step, and cheek slightly tinged with the rosy color of returning health, went along the path. Both she and the young girls who accompanied her were laden with full sheaves, for it was the time of harvest, and they were returning from a small barley-field that belonged to the king. In those days, even the daughters of kings thought it no disgrace to perform

with their own hands the tasks that Nature imposes upon man.

The mountains and the forests resounded with the merry songs of the reapers, and the crickets among the sweet-broom chirped loudly, as though they would rival the young girls in their music. The bees, laden with their sweet booty, and clad in their yellow, waxen hose, were flying to their homes in the trunks of the hollow trees. A flock of noisy crows were shrilly chattering among the tops of the tall pines. Graceful deer paused at the edge of the wood to listen to the singing, and fled with agile foot if they chanced to hear the barking of a dog near them. Overhead, like a dark spot upon the rosy evening sky, hovered the golden eagle, seeking his prey with piercing eye.

The little party soon reached an elevation, from whose top, bare of trees, they could enjoy a charming view of the surrounding

country. The western sky still glowed with varied colors, for the sun had sunk to rest amid purple and gold-bordered clouds. The evening star was already shining, peeping forth at intervals from among the clouds. And as the sun, the ruler of day, disappeared, there arose, above a dark-green stretch of woodland, that faithful, that gladly welcomed companion of the benighted wanderer, the moon. Silent, like all that is truly great and majestic, her silvery disc ascended from the dark horizon, not like the sun, repelling the dazzled gaze of men, but rather inviting their eyes to the enjoyment of its peaceful light. And when this grand light, waxing stronger and stronger as it rose higher in the sky — the gift of God to man, as his guide through the darkness,— when this grand light mirrored itself in the human eyes, the young reapers laid down their sheaves and bowed their knees to the earth,

and adored that as a deity which is but a creature of the Lord.

Baldasser united in this worship, repeating, in a suppressed tone, the prayers prescribed by the priests. But Esaias, to whom, as to all true Israelites, such idolatry was an abomination, touched with rapid hand the strings of his harp, his constant companion, and sang aloud from the 104th Psalm the verses:

"'Bless the Lord, O my soul!
O Lord, my God, Thou art very great;
Thou art clothed with honor and majesty.
Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment:
Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:
Who layest the beams of His chambers in the waters:
Who maketh the clouds His chariot:
Who walketh upon the wings of the wind.
He appointed the moon for seasons:
The sun knoweth his going down.
O Lord, how manifold are Thy works!
In wisdom hast Thou made them all:
The earth is full of Thy riches!'"

When Esaias had finished, Baldasser mildly said to him:

"Thou believest, O stranger, that thy God is greater than the moon,—indeed, that He has created this deity? How canst thou prove this?"

"Dost thou ask proof, O king?" returned Esaias. "Of what avail to thy daughter were all the conjurations of the sun, the moon, the earth, and her son? Of what avail were those of Perinthes, in the name of his gods? Only Jehovah is God, and beside Him is there none! Raise thine eyes, O king, and behold! Who has made all things? It was Jehovah, who in the beginning created the heavens and the earth. Therefore, 'the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork.' Ask of the earth, my lord! it will instruct thee; the fish of the sea will inform thee. Oh, Jehovah, our God! Thou hast made the heavens and the earth by the

might of Thine outstretched arm, and nothing is impossible with Thee!"

"But where is thy God?" asked Baldasser; "why does He not show Himself unto me, like the sun, the moon, and our earth, that I may believe in Him?"

"The God of my fathers is a spirit," replied Esaias, "and therefore invisible. But thou mayest know Him by His works. All that thou seest, from the least even unto the greatest, is the work of His hands. The sun and the moon go on in their courses, because God hath appointed them so to do. And the earth must bring forth grass and herbs, and trees and fruits, according to His will. And we men must do as he hath commanded us, else will His wrath be kindled against us, and we shall be chastised. For He is a mighty and a jealous God, who will not let transgressors go unpunished."

"What *are* the commands of thy God?"

inquired Baldasser, "and how canst thou know them, if thy God cannot be found?"

"Jehovah may everywhere be found," answered Esaias; "yet although He does mighty works, He himself may not be seen. Dost thou ask, whence comes this knowledge? Listen to me, O king, and I will tell thee."

It was a beautiful picture, and well worthy of a painter's pencil, when the women and girls laid down their golden sheaves among the sweet-broom, forming a circle around the king and his daughter and the venerable Esaias, and sat down in little picturesque groups, as reverent listeners, their blooming countenances lighted up by the rosy reflection of the sunset sky and the soft rays of the rising moon. The German king, with his long golden hair, his fine oval-shaped countenance, his light blue eyes and brown beard, sat upon a sheaf, beside the

dark Oriental, the Israelite, who formed an equally fine-looking contrast to him in appearance; and the gentle, blossom-like girl, Erna, knelt at her father's feet, resting her elbow on his knee, and supporting her animated face upon her hand.

"Tell me, O king," said Esaias, "whence sprang the first plants? the first trees? the first man?"

"From the mother of us all, the Earth!" replied Baldasser.

"Not so, good king!" said Esaias. "The earth is only able to afford to the grain of corn, the plant and the tree, the nourishment necessary for them, but not to bring them forth of her own power. And if even the earth were able to give being to man, with his limbs, his flesh and blood, his skin, his bones, yet would she be powerless to breathe into him a living soul. Nor could the first human pair have been, like the present chil-

dren of earth, obliged to grow up by degrees, like young plants, through the love and care of mothers. Not to die on the first day of their existence, they must have been created full-grown, and able to exercise all their faculties. Yes, O king! Jehovah created the first human beings, and caused that all the nations of the earth should spring from them."

"Ah! then thou art related to me, dear Esaias!" said Erna, smiling.

"It is so," replied the Hebrew. "Therefore men should neither despise nor persecute each other. Jehovah walked and conversed with the children of men," he continued, "so long as they continued His children, and obeyed Him. Their disobedience alone caused Him to withdraw His presence from them; yet He still revealed himself to those men who knew and honored him. Such an one was our father Abraham, who

early learned that gods of wood, or of stone, could not be true deities, but that Jehovah must be the only true God. Of such earthly images, Terah, the father of Abraham, possessed many, which he had prepared, and kept in a great cave, whither he went daily to implore their aid and protection. To witness this idolatrous service gave Abraham great pain; and, indeed, his father required that he also should participate in it. So, one day, he destroyed all these idols, except one, in the hand of which he placed the staff with which he had broken the rest. When Terah visited the cave to worship his idols, and found them scattered in pieces on the ground, he was filled with wrath, and cried:

"'Who hath done this?'"

"'Behold, my father,' said the young man, pointing to the image that remained standing, 'it must have been this one, for the staff

is still in his hand.' Thereupon Terah rebuked him, saying:

"'Thou foolish boy! how could it move, seeing that it hath no life?'

"'If that be so,' answered Abraham, 'how can it be a god? And why dost thou ask help from these images, which are not able even to protect themselves from a single youth like me?'

"Then Terah acknowledged with shame that his son had been wiser than himself. And Jehovah afterward revealed himself to this same Abraham in a dream, under the figure of a man, and told him that his descendants should be the Lord's own chosen people, and that through them all nations of the earth should be blessed."

"Thou makest us forget to return home," interrupted the king. "See, a chill mist is rising, which, thou hast told me, is unwholesome for Erna."

"Thou art right, my lord!" said Esaias, rising. The road to the German encampment was retraced by the little party with but few words, for all saw an expression of deep thoughtfulness on the countenance of Baldasser, and preserved a respectful silence.

When Esaias reached the lowly dwelling, which he still shared with the Greek, he found the latter before it, apparently waiting for him.

"Thou knowest, Hebrew," Perinthes commenced, "that early to-morrow morning, Baldasser and the other Germans go forth on a hunting expedition, to be absent several days?"

"I know it," replied Esaias, "for the king has confided to me the care of his daughter during his absence. There have been seen near the camp the footprints of large, wild beasts, which they hope to find and kill."

"Well! I have waited only too long for

such an opportunity," said Perinthes, "to flee with safety. Thou wilt accompany me?"

"O Perinthes!" entreated Esaias, "relinquish thy perilous intention! Immediately after the king's return from this hunt, we shall receive our freedom, and then we can return to our homes, openly and without fear. Banish thy unjust suspicions of Baldasser's rectitude, and close thine ear to the false whispers of the idol priests!"

"The atmosphere of even a barbarian court is sufficient to intoxicate poor human nature with folly!" replied Perinthes, disdainfully. "Have Baldasser's smooth words led thee so soon to forget thy fatherland and thy family? I tell thee, that so soon as thou art no longer needed here, thou wilt be cast away as the bait that has served to lure the fish. Thou wilt be detained here, until the beginning of the fearful winter season prevents all travelling.

I would not endure another winter here at any price! The autumnal frosts already show it to be approaching; follow, then, thine own self-will! But bury my design deep in thy bosom, if thou wouldst make no nearer acquaintance with this friend of mine!"

With these words, he showed the Israelite the glittering hilt of a dagger, which he immediately concealed again in his bosom.

"Do as thou wilt," said Esaias, "and fear no betrayer in me."

"I fear no man!" returned Perinthes, haughtily, as he turned to enter the hut.

CHAPTER V.

A DISAGREEABLE SURPRISE.

IT was still dark on the next morning, when Perinthes, after a sleepless night, left his bed and came out of the hut. Not far from its entrance, he found a dark object resting against the trunk of an oak; it was the Israelite, wrapped in his bear-skin, and still sleeping soundly.

"Contemptible slave!" muttered Perinthes, pausing before the sleeper, "thou thinkest thyself, in thine arrogance, above sharing the couch of a noble Greek! I might repay thy pride with a thrust from my dagger, but I cannot find it in my heart to deprive Mamuh of his sacrifice. Yea, good Esaias, to-day thou wilt be with

thy fathers in Paradise, and that quite contrary to thy expectations. But I hear the dogs barking, and the barbarians hurrying to their place of meeting. Directly after they have set out, will be the best time for me to slip quietly away in the opposite direction. The king's stupid carelessness has enabled me to gather from among their booty quite enough money for my journey. And now, O ye gods! strike all these barbarians with blindness and deafness, lame their feet, and mislead their hounds; yea, hurl them all this day deep down to Tartarus!"

With this vindictive curse on his lips, Perinthes stole cautiously away into the woods.

Immediately after, the sound of the ox-horns, the signal for the departure of the hunt, awakened the Israelite. He went to the king's house, before which the Germans,

eager for the sport, stood in all the pride of their strength, an array of tall, faultless figures, all wonderfully alike. Baldasser's fine horse was stamping and neighing impatiently, awaiting its master. He soon appeared, and smiling as he perceived the Israelite, said to him:

"Erna is already rejoicing over the tales thou wilt tell her during my absence. The Greek, it seems, does not share in our hunt,—well, he is more woman than man. He must still be asleep?"

"It may be so," replied Esaias, and stood looking thoughtfully after the hunting-party, until, amid the sound of horns and the barking of dogs, they disappeared in the woods.

In obedience to her father's wish, Erna seldom crossed the threshold of his house during his absence, and never went beyond the bounds of the encampment. It might

have been about five hours from the time when the hunting-party set out, and noon was approaching, when Esaias sat with her among a little circle of women and girls, who had visited the king's daughter, partly to render her their services, partly to bear her company during the king's absence.

The Old Testament Scriptures has the rich treasury from which Esaias drew the histories he narrated to the child. On account of its similarity with Erna's affliction, he had on this day chosen the story of the Syrian leper.

"The ruler of a mighty people," he began, "whose land is near my native country, was very ill, far more so than thou, O princess! No one could relieve his sufferings; indeed, all men avoided him. But he was a good man, and kind to his servants, for which reason they all loved him. Among these was a young damsel of my people, who had

been taken prisoner, and who lived in the house of the suffering prince, and she pitied him. 'Ah,' she said, 'if my lord would but go to the man of God who dwells in Samaria, he would surely heal his disease.' When the ruler heard this, he journeyed and came to the man of God, and entreated him to heal him. The holy man told him to wash seven times in the Jordan, the river of my country. The ruler at first despised the prophet's counsel, for he thought that there were waters in his own land that possessed more virtue than those of the Jordan, but at last, when entreated by one of his servants, he obeyed. And behold! his health returned! In his great joy and thankfulness, he offered the man of God the richest gifts; but the prophet refused them, because he was rich in his God."

"And what became of the little girl?" asked Erna.

"The ruler gave her her freedom, with great gifts," replied Esaias.

"Hast thou seen the river in which the sick man bathed?"

"I have," replied Esaias. "We have also in Jerusalem a pool which possesses wonderful properties. A messenger of our God sometimes moves the waters, and whoever then first steps into the water, is cured of whatever disease afflicts him."

"Why have we no such river or pool?" said Erna.

"Because thy people know not our God," answered Esaias.

At this moment, a heavy hand was laid upon his shoulder, and as he turned in surprise, the threatening countenance of the high-priest Mamuh, who had entered the apartment unobserved by the eager listeners, met his eye.

"Leave the room, stranger," said Mamuh,

in a tone of command. "I have something to say to the king's daughter, which is not for thine ears."

Obedient to this direction, Esaias went out, but at the threshold of the adjoining room found himself surrounded by five or six priests, who seized him with strong hands.

"Be silent, and follow us," they said, in a low voice, "or beware of our knives!" And one of them brandished his heavy granite knife menacingly over Esaias's head.

"What do ye propose against me?" he asked, firmly, though his face was pale. "Fear ye rather your king's wrath, which will be kindled hotly against you, if ye do me any violence."

"Thou art an evil sorcerer," said one of the priests, "and Baldasser will learn to thank us for delivering him and his child from thine enchantments. Better endure the king's wrath than that of the gods."

Comprehending that resistance would be vain, Esaias decided to follow his captors quietly. But at this moment, shrill cries, uttered by women's voices, rent the air; and as the priests, with Esaias, stepped out of the king's dwelling, they suddenly scattered like spray driven before the wind. The freed Israelite found himself overpowered and borne to the earth by the sudden onset of some powerful foe, and was at the same time terrified by a loud crashing and rending, which seemed to proceed from the fall of the king's house.

The recollection of the little girl confided to his care made him forget all else. He sprang to his feet, and saw before him a huge black monster, with short, thick horns apparently strong as iron, with which he was breaking up the wooden house as easily as if it had been made of shreds. All the women and girls, except Erna, were escaping

from the openings in the house,—her he did not see.

"The aurochs! the aurochs!" cried the women, trying to hide behind the trunks of the trees.

And now the last corner of the king's house fell before the blows of the raging beast. A loud peal of laughter accompanied its fall. It was from Erna's lips; she was upright in the midst of the ruins, whirling around in a circle, apparently unconscious of the neighborhood of the fierce aurochs. Just as the monster lowered his unsightly head, to catch the child upon his horns, Esaias threw all his weight upon one of the horns, throwing one arm around the great neck, and with the other hand dealing heavy and rapid blows upon the protruding eyes of the aurochs. Foaming with rage, and bellowing furiously, the powerful beast tried to throw his antagonist off, raising and lower-

ing his head in vain. Esaias made the short but perilous ascent and descent with the motions of the infuriated animal, never once intermitting the blows he was showering upon the great eyes.

A redoubled effort on the monster's part at last threw Esaias, like a ball, into the air. What awaited him when he should fall to the earth, at the side of the furious animal, may easily be imagined; but it was otherwise ordered than as the now half stupefied Israelite feared. The noisy barking of dogs, and the sound of many voices greeted his ear, mingled with the sullen roar of the aurochs. In another moment, he heard a heavy fall, and when he ventured to open his eyes, he saw Baldasser on his horse, just in the act of drawing his hunting-spear from the neck of the fallen creature, which was also pierced in many places by the lances of the king's followers.

Baldasser's eyes were soon turned from the still quivering beast in search of his daughter. He found her under a tree at some distance from the scene of the conflict, whither she had been led by some of her women, who, animated by the brave example of the Israelite, had ventured near enough to take her away. Joy at finding her safe at first outweighed his pain in seeing her malady renewed with more than its former violence.

The high-priest, Mamuh, approached him as he sat near the carcass of the aurochs, gazing sadly at his daughter, who was singing and dancing wildly before him.

"Behold, O king!" he began, with severity, "the chastisements of our gods, because thou hast yielded thyself and thy daughter to the influence of a foreign sorcerer, who, by his enchantments, worked a seeming improvement in her condition — as thou seest, not a real or

lasting one. I came into thy house just as the faithless Hebrew, availing himself of thy absence, thought to lead thy child to the gods of his nation. And at that instant, Teut, the great son of the earth, sent the aurochs to destroy the magician. A short time only, through his enchantments, he withstood the animal; but the beast was too much for him, and would have killed him, had he not fallen under thy spear. Arise, then, O king! no longer withhold from Teut the offering which once before he chose for his own, and which thou, through mistaken judgment, and by the counsel of the false Perinthes, didst rob him of. Let his blood flow to-day, that thy child may be healed!"

At the same time, Esaias lay among the trees, bruised and sore, and sighed out:

"Lord Jehovah, visit me not in anger, chastise me not in Thy wrath! How near

did I imagine myself to the object of my desires! And now Thy wrath is kindled against these heathen, and Thou hidest Thy face from them, who are still sitting in the valley and shadow of death, although Thou hast permitted them to hear of Thy wonders by my mouth! Thou hast shown them that Thou art able to send health or sickness, according to thy mighty will. Burnt-offerings and meat-offerings please Thee not; therefore art Thou wroth with these Gentiles, who sacrifice human blood to their idols. But, Lord, Thou wilt not turn away Thy loving-kindness from me; let Thy faithfulness and mercy ever be my protection. And hast Thou not said, that the child shall not answer for the evil deeds of his fathers? Therefore, O Jehovah! cast out the spirit of disease from the daughter of the king, that the heathen may praise Thy name! None is like unto Thee, O Lord! Thou art great,

and Thy name greatly to be feared, and Thou canst magnify it by mighty deeds. Who shall not fear Thee, Thou King of all the earth? Thee shall all men obey!"

In another part of the German encampment, a prisoner was brought to his place of confinement. It was Perinthes, who had been discovered and captured in his flight. Torn and bloody, he walked in the midst of his captors. He knew but too well the fate that was before him, yet, when he learned what had passed, he muttered, with malicious, vindictive satisfaction:

"So, ye gods! ye have swiftly avenged me upon the barbarian king and his daughter, and this haughty Hebrew! Oh, had ye but fulfilled all my prayer, and cast all this people at once into Tartarus! Why, O goddess Diana, dost thou not protect thy worshipper against these faithless wretches? Perinthes would have sacrificed a hecatomb

upon thy altar, hadst thou but aided him to reach Ephesus in safety!"

Such were the words of the German, the Israelite, and the Greek; each measured by the misfortune of the day the wrath of the being or beings that he worshipped, thus attributing to divinity the passions of humanity.

When the will of kings and mighty men of earth is crossed and thwarted by a higher Will, they too often vent their chagrin upon their dependants. This was now the case with Baldasser. Carried away by Mamuh's sinister representations, and rendered impatient by his daughter's unhappy condition, he commanded Esaias, on pain of death, to cure Erna in three days, at the furthest.

This presumption provoked the austere Israelite.

"Am I then a god," he said, sternly, "that I can give life and health? It is not

my skill, it is the grace of Jehovah alone that bestowed the renewal of health upon thy child. It is He who giveth life and breath to all men everywhere. And thou presumest, O king, to appoint unto the Lord my God, after thine own pleasure, the times and seasons when he shall help thee? What art thou, that thou dost tempt Jehovah? Such boldness deserves no favor, but rather displeasure and wrath."

"Thou refusest, thou poor worm?" exclaimed Baldasser, his anger breaking forth. "Is not thy life in my hand?"

"It rests in the hand of my God," replied Esaias, with perfect calmness, "and I refuse to tempt Him at thy bidding."

"Away with him, he is yours!" cried Baldasser to the priests.

With silent rejoicings they led away the destined sacrifice to the cave where Perinthes already lay in chains on the hard earth.

"Well," said the Greek, in derision, forgetting his own misfortunes in those of his enemy, "did I not prophesy aright? Now thou receivest the reward of thy stubbornness and credulity."

"And thou, the wages of thy faithlessness," returned Esaias. "I can console myself by remembering that I have acted uprightly. This thou canst not do, and the reflection must embitter thy death."

"This time will no Perinthes come forward," said the Greek, "to snatch thee from Teut. Hearest thou that they are sharpening the knives for our throats? That was once my business."

Esaias made him no answer. He recalled to mind the three men in the fiery furnace, and began to repeat their prayers aloud.

As he did so, overcome by the exertions and trials of the day, his eyes gently closed,

and the slumber of a good conscience fell upon him.

How long he had remained thus sweetly sleeping, he knew not, when a strange hand shook and awakened him. He looked up, and saw, by the light of a torch carried by a boy, King Baldasser standing near him. Every trace of rage had disappeared from his noble countenance, only an expression of silent grief still overshadowed it.

"Arise, O stranger!" he commanded, mildly.

Now for the first time Esaias discovered that his feet and hands were no longer bound. Not without difficulty he arose, and Baldasser continued:

"Yesterday, I was ungrateful toward thee. I was too hasty, and I am come how to repair my fault. It was not until late that I learned from the women how thou, at the peril of thy own life, didst preserve my child

from the furious beast. Art thou willing again to undertake Erna's cure, if I prescribe to thee no time?"

"I am willing, yet I may perhaps be unable to accomplish it," replied Esaias. "For Jehovah, the God of my fathers, has turned away His face in wrath from thee and thy child, and His anger cools not so quickly as thine, O king!"

"Does thy God desire a sacrifice? Let Him demand what He will, it shall be brought unto Him!"

"Obedience is better than burnt-offering, and a willing heart than the fat of rams," replied Esaias. "Jehovah abhors human sacrifice, and saith, 'Whoever sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.'"

"Erna's attendants told me," said Baldasser, "that thou hast recounted to them how a ruler had been cured of a grave malady by

washing seven times in a river in thy country. And they say that there is a pool in the royal city of thy people, which is sometimes troubled by a messenger from thy God, and that whoever first steps into the pool, is cured of whatever disease may afflict him."

"It is true," answered Esaias. "The God of my fathers doeth great wonders, yet He is not always acknowledged."

"In her wild singing, Erna expresses a wish to bathe in that river or pool," said Baldasser.

"O ye holy waters of Bethesda, and of Jordan," exclaimed the Israelite, forgetting for a moment the presence of the king, in his rapt enthusiasm, "might I but once more behold you! might I but refresh my weary limbs in your waves!"

"Wouldst thou be willing to accompany me and Erna thither?" asked Baldasser;—"that is, if the journey will not injure the child."

"What! Wilt *thou* go, O king?" asked Esaias, in surprise. "Bethink you, the distance is great,—the journey will be long. It is true that the Queen of Sheba once left her kingdom, to come and learn wisdom at the feet of Solomon; but art thou sure that in thy absence thy people would not choose another king?"

"Be that as it may," replied Baldasser; "what will not a father do for the sake of his beloved child? Come, let us prepare for the journey at once."

Perinthes had listened to this dialogue with feelings of mingled envy and hope. Pride struggled hard in his breast with the love of life, when he found that the king and Esaias were about leaving the cave without thinking of him. He did not speak, but a heavy sigh burst from his oppressed bosom. The Israelite heard it, and paused.

"O king!" he said, imploringly, "grant

me yet one more favor! Accord to this Greek life and freedom, upon condition that he accompanies us on this journey. He knows the lands through which we must pass, and their speech, better than I do. He can therefore be of much service to us."

"Be it so," returned Baldasser, as he at once released Perinthes from his bonds.

"How incensed will be the priest Mamuh," thought the Greek, rejoicing to himself, "to find his prey again snatched from his hands! Ye gods! I would that my back were already turned upon this barbarian camp!"

He followed Baldasser and the Israelite, the boy with the torch leading the way. The king's dwelling was already rebuilt, and all was quiet therein, for Erna, after long and violent convulsions, had just fallen asleep, utterly exhausted. Preparations for the journey were made without delay.

Many hands were employed in constructing a litter for the sick girl, suitable either to be drawn by horses, or carried by bearers. In this business, Perinthes was of much service, accustomed as he was to articles of convenience and luxury. Esaias in the meantime melted the gold which had been taken from the bag the Greek had carried with him in his attempted flight. He hammered and chiselled and cut the precious metal, also cutting some hard oak wood. But he informed no one of his purpose in doing so; on the contrary, his labor itself was a secret. After three days, during which Erna's condition was not improved, all was ready for the journey.

The king, in a few cordial words, took leave of his people, with whom he had left a worthy vicegerent, or, if need should be, successor. The people thanked him for his care, and parted from him sorrowing, and

expressing the most ardent wishes for his welfare. Only Mamuh and the other priests kept apart, thus displaying their vexation at their king's proceedings.

Beside Baldasser, his daughter, and Esaias, the party consisted of a playmate of Erna's, of her own age, two women, a boy, and sixteen stout German horsemen.

They set out on a bright, clear morning, and directed their course toward the southeast.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE WAY.

THE journey had now continued for about two months, and we once more meet Baldasser and his train, near the end of October. Their route, up to this time, had led them through the still almost undisturbed forest solitudes of Europe, which had supplied the simple Germans with all the provisions necessary to them, — with game, acorns, and wild berries, as well as grass for their horses. The few inhabitants whom they met belonged to shepherd tribes, and received and entertained the wandering strangers most hospitably in their humble dwellings.

The air, as they progressed, had grown

warmer and warmer, and at this time they felt nothing whatever of the chilling wintry blasts that were wont to blow over the marshy woods of Germany at the close of autumn.

It was on a clear, sunny October day that the inhabitants of a certain little village, as they were diligently pursuing their labors in their fields, were surprised by seeing a singular-looking procession emerge from a neighboring wood. Strange-looking men, of gigantic stature, clothed in rough skins, approached them, riding on huge horses with long manes and tails. They held long spears in their right hands, and had heavy stone battle-axes in their leathern girdles. Long hair, of a golden-yellow color, fell from their uncovered heads over their shoulders and upon their shaggy bear-skins. The peaceful villagers were about to take flight, when a new sight redoubled their

curiosity and arrested their steps. Women and children were seen among the approaching company surrounding a litter, upon which lay a young girl apparently sleeping. The little party halted on catching sight of the village, which was very prettily situated, and near which was a rather high hill, crowned with a partially ruined temple.

The view amply compensated them for the brief interruption in their journey. For it was the first time that these Germans had ever seen stone dwellings, and architecture of any sort. For the first time they looked upon the colonnades and the lofty arches of a temple; for the first time they beheld trees whose green boughs were decked with rosy apples and golden pears. Countless vines, with their purple and white clusters, covered the hill-side; and below in the wide valley, a river, broad and deep, glistened in the sun; little fishing-vessels rocked

upon its bosom, and the men who sat in them plied the oar with merry songs. All around were unfamiliar plants, with myriads of gay autumnal flowers, yellow, deep-red, and spotted grain, together with many other new and strange sights.

"Oh, how beautiful it is here!" exclaimed Esaias. "Let us, O king, dismount and enjoy repose on this spot."

The king consented; but instead of gazing with his companions upon the beautiful landscape, he gave his attention to his daughter, lifting her tenderly from the litter, and placing her with care upon her couch of skins. After he had thus provided for her comfort, Baldasser turned to Esaias, and said in a low tone:

"My poor child will never see the Jordan, nor thy wonderful pool. See how pale and feeble, how still she lies there! Every day of this journey has robbed her of a part of

her strength. And how patiently and uncomplainingly she endures her sufferings! Alas! I would willingly see her dancing and singing again."

"Tempt not Jehovah, the Lord our God!" replied Esaias, gravely. "I assure thee that thy child will recover. It is true, Erna is somewhat exhausted by travelling through dark, marshy forests, and by the want of nourishment suitable to her condition. But I trust that, by God's mercy, her coming into well-settled and cultivated countries will have a beneficial effect upon her."

"May the gods grant it!" hovered upon the king's lips, but remembering just at the right moment that such expressions always appeared to disquiet Esaias, he repressed the words.

The Israelite straightway left the party, but soon returned, carrying a basket filled with purple and white grapes, pears, apples,

and ripe plums. He had purchased these fruits for a trifle from the natives of the country, and now came and offered them to the king. As he was wont to do, Baldasser thought first of his daughter. He put the largest and sweetest of the grapes to Erna's lips, and was delighted to see that she enjoyed them.

"Do they taste better than your acorns at home?" asked Esaias, with a smile, of the Germans, as they feasted upon the fruit.

Only one of the little party wore no cheerful countenance. It was Perinthes. While the Germans regarded the village and the temple with looks of wondering admiration, he muttered, depreciatingly:

"Such an owl's nest as *this* beautiful! What barbarism! O my Ephesus, when will mine eyes behold thee once more?"

Approaching the laborers in the fields, he inquired the name of their country and

that of the village, as well as the distance from Ephesus. Then he returned, scowling gloomily, to the travelling party, and drew Esaias aside.

"Did I not say that we were going too far eastward? and now we have the Euxine on our right, and an interminable land-journey before us," he said.

"Dost thou suppose that Erna could endure a voyage by sea?" asked Esaias. "The rocking of the vessel would have heightened her malady to the greatest degree."

"Well, and what then?" answered Perinthes. "What difference does it make, whether there be one girl more or less in the world?" and he bit his finger-nails wrathfully. After a pause, he resumed:

"And how like children these red-haired savages act! Such an outcry about a miserable spot of ground, with an old, dilapidated temple, and a few sour grapes, pears, apples,

and plums! O my Ephesus! thy giant clusters, thy purple pomegranates, thy sweet figs and peaches, thy almonds and dates, and above all, thy temple of Diana, are the only things worth admiring in the world."

Esaias quit the company of the complaining Greek, went away, and returned after a longer absence than before, bringing from the village a large stone jar full of pure, new wine.

"Thou wert wont to utter wisdom when the juice of barley had enlivened thee, O king!" he said to Baldasser. "Try now whether this beverage will not strengthen thy wavering courage, and give thee better hopes for Erna's future."

Baldasser shook his head sadly, but tasted the wine, which was then passed around among the company. Even Erna was allowed a few drops, in order to refresh her weariness. It was not long before the bever-

age took effect upon all the party. Their exhaustion vanished, their fresh color returned, they moved and spoke less wearily. Even the lips and cheeks of the sick child lost their pallor, and at last, to her father's great delight, she sat up erect. He, on his part, watched every motion of Erna's with a loving and joyful expression. The child, holding the hand of her playmate Hermina, soon began to walk about and examine with curious interest the unfamiliar fruits and flowers that surrounded her.

"Oh, see, Erna!" cried Odo, Hermina's brother, "see that strange animal with the long ears!"

It was an ass, which was coming up the hill, laden with two large baskets filled with corn. His mistress followed him on foot, and was as much astonished at the appearance of the group of strangers as her animal was indifferent to them. She stood still

to take a better view of them, and her patient bearer of burdens followed her example, taking advantage of the pause to crop some red thistle-blossoms and long spiny leaves that grew near. The king's daughter and her two young companions watched him narrowly. Suddenly, however, they clung closely to each other, screaming, and ran away. Baldasser and his sturdy Germans, at the same instant, sprang up from the grass and seized their battle-axes. And at this threatening movement the woman, terrified, hurried away, and left her long-eared companion. There were only two persons who retained their composure, — Perinthes and Esaias. The former laughed loud and mockingly, the latter only smiled. And what was the cause of this general commotion?

The monosyllable "y-a-a-ah" is short, and seemingly innocent enough. It ex-

presses, however, the whole language of the long-eared race. And it is with this word as with many other things, — its whole import cannot be learned at a moment. What a difference between the short written syllable, and the sound as delivered by the robust lungs of an ass! And as the bombardier-beetle has only a little bluish vapor and a feeble report like a far-off shot, as a defence against its enemies, so, instead of horns, claws, and powerful teeth, the ass possesses only his harsh, ear-piercing bray. This sound, so startling when heard for the first time and unexpectedly, was what had terrified not only the young Germans, but their elders.

The fear of a renewal of Erna's peculiar sufferings soon brought a grave, anxious expression to the face of Esaias. The sudden alarm indeed caused her to laugh hysterically, and to twitch and quiver in a

convulsive manner for a little while; but Esaias observed, as a favorable symptom, that the attack was of very short duration. It seemed, indeed, as though her malady was partially subdued by the ever-increasing curiosity inspired by this land of wonders. Scarcely had Herr Long-ears followed his mistress, and disappeared from the sight of the little party, before a troop of animals approached them, of most extraordinary form, and of a size such as they had never before seen. Even the monstrous aurochs was small, in comparison with the lofty, humped figures of the yellow camels, which proceeded at a leisurely pace, heavily laden, and thrusting their long necks with their small heads out before them.

While Perinthes detained the camel-drivers to answer his questions, the wearied beasts, bending first their forelegs and then their hind legs, gently sunk upon the ground

to rest. The children gazed timidly at them from a distance; for they thought, if the small animal that had just gone had such a terrible voice, what a cry must these creatures possess that are so much larger! It took Esaias, therefore, some time to persuade Erna and the other children to venture near.

"The Lord is great and wise!" he said, pointing to the camels. "He has given these beasts feet capable of travelling without pain over the burning sand; a palate that is satisfied with thistles and such other herbs as grow in desert countries; and a stomach which not only seldom complains of thirst, but which even possesses its own reservoir of water. His hump indicates his capability of bearing burdens; and he has so mild a disposition, that when man's avarice has imposed on him too heavy a burden, he only kneels and waits patiently until it is

removed. And when blasting winds blow over the desert with their glowing breath, he buries his head in the sand, so as to cover his nostrils, and thus escapes destruction."

After the caravan had passed on, Baldasser's attention was directed toward the temple; he approached it to examine it more closely, accompanied by Erna, who rejoiced his lately desponding spirit by showing a desire to see the ruin with him. Even in its present condition, this building was calculated to excite the wonder and admiration of the rude Germans.

The vaulted roofs re-echoed Baldasser's tread. On passing into the rather obscure interior of the temple, a feeling of mysterious awe oppressed him, and caused him to step slowly and almost timidly. Erna stole along like a shadow at his side. Suddenly and unexpectedly they found themselves

before a large stone image of Jupiter, in whose honor the temple had been erected. Both father and daughter were deeply impressed by this, to them, novel work of art. Dumb with wonder, they gazed long upon the grave and venerable countenance of the deity, rendered more majestic by its heavy beard;—its appearance so lifelike, though it was but cold stone. They marvelled at the drapery, so graceful and flowing; at the hands, one of which bore a thunderbolt—yet all carved in stone; at the eagle, near the feet of the god, which bore in its hooked beak, and in its talons, many similar thunderbolts. Baldasser stood in awe-struck expectancy, waiting for the unknown deity to move and to address him.

Perinthes interrupted his reverie by exclaiming:

"How awkwardly this Zeus is chiselled! He is like one of our lusty water-carriers,

rather than a god. The man that raised such an image of divinity as that must have been a miserable bungler."

"How?" thought Baldasser; "this a god, yet like a water-carrier? A god, and chiselled by a bungler?" He shook his head, and turning from the stone image, passed out through the long colonnade into the open air. The moon was shining in the darkening horizon, gilding the little waves of the river that flowed through the valley.

"Oh, see!" said Baldasser to Erna, "*our* god up there is more majestic and mighty! He is not confined to one seat, like this stone god,— his house never falls. He has accompanied us here, yet he never ceases to shine upon our German brethren at home. His countenance is ever friendly, nor can any king resemble him, much less can a water-carrier."

"Esaias says," replied Erna, "that He who

made our moon-god is still greater and more glorious."

"Esaias!" repeated Baldasser, "ha! where is he? Esaias!" he called aloud, "Esaias! where art thou?"

"Here, my lord!" answered the Israelite from without the colonnade.

"Why art thou not with us?" asked the king. "Wilt thou not enter the temple?"

"No, my lord!" replied Esaias. "God forbid that I should, of my own free will, enter the temple of a heathen god, and so be defiled."

"Defiled!" repeated Baldasser, with surprise, looking first at his own clothing, then surveying his daughter from head to foot.

"Thou errest, Hebrew!" he said, "there is no trace of defilement."

"My *soul* would be defiled," said Esaias, "if, contrary to our law, I should go into a heathen temple."

"Thy soul?" said Baldasser, inquiringly. "I understand thee not."

"Our law forbids to eat unclean beasts, to live with unclean persons, and to honor false gods, or to go into their temples."

"Am I an unclean man?" asked Baldasser.

"If thou wilt hear the truth, — yes!" answered Esaias.

"Is my child, too, unclean?"

"Thy child also," said Esaias. "He who believes not in the God of Israel is unclean, and the Hebrew is commanded to avoid close association with him."

"But thou hast lived very near to us, and thou hast helped and restored my child," said Baldasser.

"For this I must undergo purification in the temple of Jehovah."

"He is a fool!" cried Perinthes, wrathfully, interrupting the conversation, — "a

proud, conceited, superstitious fool, who thinks himself better than I and thou. I wonder at thy forbearance, king; in thy place, I would long ago have silenced this Hebrew's blasphemous mouth. As soon as he no longer needs thy aid, he will forsake thee, and leave thee to thy fate."

"If my child may be healed through the Hebrew, or by his God, I will willingly bear reproach," answered Baldasser, gently. "We have endured much more than that already."

"And dare I deny the faith that I learned in my childhood?" asked Esaias, in an apologetic tone.

"Let us leave this subject," said Baldasser, "and seek repose for the night. Erna appears wearied and sleepy. Where shall we find a safe, sheltered place?"

"Do not give thyself any anxiety about that," said Esaias; "thy child will no longer be obliged to sleep in cold, damp woods,

amid unhealthy vapors. She shall henceforth pass the night under better roofs than the foliage of oaks, and between walls that afford surer protection than the skins of beasts."

He kept his word. The inhabitants of the village hospitably received the strangers into their houses, offering them food and drink in abundance.

During the night, Esaias was awakened by something that stirred under his head. He had taken for pillow a bundle in which were the valuables he had prepared for Baldasser's journey, and the remaining pieces of gold. Instead of giving an alarm, the Israelite lay silent and motionless. It was evident that some one was trying to remove the parcel; but the efforts were suspended for a few moments, then resumed, and afterward, on proving unavailing, were at last abandoned. And now Esaias, listening, became aware

that the thief was trying to make a hole in the leathern pouch that contained the precious bundle. Just as the point of the sharp tool reached its contents, he dealt so heavy a blow upon the hand that used the instrument, as to make the latter fall ringing to the ground. Upon this, he seized the hand of the thief, and held it firmly. The adroitness and agility of his opponent, however, overcame the Hebrew's superior strength. Like an eel, the thief writhed from the grasp of his captor, and in the next instant, almost without a sound, had slipped out of the chamber.

"That soft hand belonged to no German," murmured Esaias, "nor do the Germans steal, though they may rob and murder. Our host, or any of his household,—no! they would not so abuse the sacred rights of hospitality. Perinthes! ah, the artful and malicious Greek! it is he who

would provide himself with money for travelling! That is the reason why he refused to sleep here in the house with the Germans and myself, choosing, contrary to his custom, a bed in the stable among the horses. Hark! what a noise in the stable! Why do the horses neigh and stamp so loudly? Can it be that he fears to have betrayed himself, and means to make his escape even without money? But why does he cry out so? What is the matter, Perinthes?" he asked, calling through the opening that did duty as a window.

"A thief was in the stable, and would have stolen the horses," answered Perinthes, with assumed indignation. "And when I would have taught him a good lesson with my dagger, he snatched it from me and fled."

"I pity thee for thy fright," replied Esaias, laughing. "Why didst thou prefer sleeping

in the stable to remaining here like myself, safe among honest Germans?"

And turning away from the window, he said to himself:

"Thou canst not ensnare me with thy cunning, excellent Perinthes! thou wouldst have thy dagger back again. It is well that I can draw the serpent's sting so easily."

He sought the dagger on the floor, and carefully concealed it in the folds of his robe. Perinthes congratulated himself in silence, when, on the next day, Esaias did not allude to the night's adventure.

CHAPTER VII.

AN ORIENTAL CITY.

THE further southward the travellers journeyed, the more lovely they found the earth to be. And now they had reached the favored land of Persia.

The palm raised its canopy of broad leaves under a sapphire sky. No tiny, bitter acorns lay on the ground beneath it, but large and luscious fruit. More and more spicy, sweet, and juicy seemed all the fruits, more and more brilliant the colors of blossoms, butterfles, beetles, serpents, lizards, birds, and all other animals. What life and animation in the forests! What singing, chattering, tumbling, screaming, whistling, roaring, on all sides! Whichever way the

eye might turn, there was nothing but life, beauty, and grace. What a contrast to the dark, silent woods of Germany! The sun here afforded more light and heat, the moon shone more bright, and the stars twinkled more charmingly. But the lightning blazed, too, more luridly; the thunder rolled, the hurricane raged more fearfully, the rain fell more wildly. And under the flowery carpet of the plain lurked the deadly venom of the brilliant snake, the dull scorpion, and the tiny, despised spider and ant. And here, along with the manifold gifts for use and pleasure in a hot climate, stalked the plague, the small-pox, the leprosy; and here dwelt a slothful and corrupt race.

By means of the journey, the constant exposure to pure, fresh air, the reviving power of a warmer sunshine, and enjoyment of digestible and wholesome food, Erna, if not yet freed from her malady, had become

much stronger. Her attacks, announced by contortions, dancing, laughing, and singing, still returned with more or less violence at certain hours of the day. But the child grew surprisingly, and evidently gained much in physical, but still more in mental strength.

Baldasser and his companions one day passed through a very extensive wood, and when they had left it, with its many strange inhabitants, behind, they saw before them a city, larger and more imposing than any they had yet beheld. It lay in the midst of a plain, surrounded by gently swelling hills, and, like almost all large cities, on the banks of a considerable stream. They learned from those they met that the city was named Ispahan, and was the residence of a powerful Oriental king.

It was the first time that the travellers had seen such a city, and both Esaias and Perin-

thes thought it important that Baldasser should enter the city as a king, and greet his royal brother. To this end the party halted at some distance from the gates of Ispahan, and formed a regular procession. Having first cleansed and rubbed their raven-black steeds until their hides rivalled polished ebony, the Germans turned their attention to their own persons. Clean white clothing, of linen, fine hemp, or wool, was unpacked and put on. Over this they bound their carefully cleaned skins of the deer, the wolf, and the bear, so as to form mantles, resting upon their shoulders and falling down their backs. Following the custom of the country through which they were passing, they had fastened leathern sandals to their feet with small thongs. Their long, auburn hair, descending in flowing locks about their faces, furnished them a natural adornment.

And if the men of Germany formed a picture of knightly strength and dignity, the two women and the children far surpassed them in grace and beauty. Erna, with her pure complexion lighted up by a soft and varying color, seemed like a delicate being from another sphere. King Baldasser had exchanged his dark bear-skin for the striped skin of a leopard which he had chanced to kill on the journey. As he was about mounting his impatient horse, to take his place at the head of the little procession, the Israelite approached, bearing something that glittered and shone in the sunlight.

"Bow thy kingly head, my lord," he said, "and receive this ornament, for if thou wouldst be received and honored in these countries as a king, thou must not appear without thy crown."

Thus saying, he set upon Baldasser's head a many-pointed circlet of gold.

"It weighs heavily, like all earthly crowns," he continued, smiling, seeing that the king shook his head rather impatiently, "yet must thou be content to bear this slight burden."

When Baldasser, having mounted his horse, reached for his accustomed lance, Esaias gave him, instead, a gracefully carved staff of oaken wood, with handle and tip of gold, and ornamented with several rings of the same precious metal.

"Before this sceptre," he said, "the people of Asia will bow more reverently than they would before thy German lance, though the weapon may inflict deeper wounds."

Baldasser submitted to the Israelite's directions, and Perinthes at last discovered what Esaias had made so secretly in the German camp, and carried with him so carefully hidden throughout the journey.

And now the simple procession again

started. What marvels of architecture astonished their eyes, as they approached the city! Lofty domes and cupolas towered like enormous palm-trees toward the sky; and a labyrinth of streets, lined with countless houses, involved them in curious perplexity. But the crowning wonder of all were the bridges, with their wide arches, which spanned the river, and spared the Germans the trouble of fording its waters.

The travellers met but few of the brownish-yellow dwellers of the city in the streets, but there was quite a great crowd collected near the royal palace. In the large open square before it, a multitude of upturned faces met their view, and a loud murmur, as of a gigantic bee-hive, filled the air. It was with difficulty that Baldasser and his retinue pressed forward. Those nearest them, indeed, made way respectfully, while surveying the strangers with looks of curiosity;

but the throng behind pressed eagerly forward, to see in their turn the new wonder. Suddenly arose a deafening clang of many drums, large and small, cymbals, trumpets, and sackbuts, causing the German horses to rear madly, and giving their riders no little trouble in restraining them. The crowd fell back in terror, and the more quickly because, at this moment, a number of swift-footed Persians ran in among them with long bamboos, distributing smart blows with considerable energy. These active officials seemed half disposed to exercise their discipline upon the new comers, but a quick, menacing motion of the German lances made them relinquish the idea as quickly as it was formed.

The wonder of the Germans rose at every moment higher and higher. To a motley throng of musicians, with their marvellous trumpets and drums and other instruments,

succeeded a train of moving houses, or towers, rising high above the heads of the multitude. As these approached, it became apparent that each of the structures was borne upon the back of a gigantic monster, beside which the tallest camel would appear small. These animals had immense heads, with long probosces, immense ears, and a pair of tusks of astonishing length and thickness; and most wonderful of all, a man, black as ebony, sat with outstretched limbs on the neck of each! These drivers were armed with short lances, with which they urged on the unwieldy creatures. The wooden towers, which were bound upon the dark-gray backs of the animals, were crowded with similar black figures, looking down upon the amazed Germans with inquisitive eyes. The mighty monsters passed on, setting down their heavy feet with the utmost lightness and rapidity.

The wonder of Baldasser and his com-

panions rose however to its greatest height when, after the elephants had passed, another strange spectacle presented itself to their sight. A second throng of musicians, soldiers and servants, approached, followed by a pair of tawny lions, harnessed to a low but richly ornamented chariot, and led by two gigantic Moors. In the chariot, a Moorish king sat crosslegged under a canopy which was decorated, like the monarch himself, with pearls, sparkling stones, peacock's feathers, and gold. The crown that ornamented the king's curly head, shone with costly diamonds; and the large white pearls which served as ear-drops, showed the more plainly on account of the black skin behind them. On one shoulder of the swarthy monarch sat an ugly little ape, and on the other a gaudy parrot, both incessantly chattering and screaming. Two negroes, standing behind the king, fanned him constantly

with large fans of peacock's feathers. The royal chariot was surrounded and followed by many more black servants, musicians, and soldiers.

It would be difficult to say which of the two kings, so different in color, in clothing, and in appearance, felt most surprise at the encounter. The attendants of his Moorish Majesty shared the wonder of their lord, and expressed it to one another by signs, looks, and words. The Germans, on their part, though not less struck, remained as silent and immovable upon their lofty steeds as though carved from stone. The German king, indeed, lacked the lavish display of wealth and magnificence which surrounded his royal brother; but there was sufficient to atone for this want, in his dignified and commanding mien, and the gigantic stature of his followers. The women and children, with their pure and delicately tinted com-

plexions, were the objects of particular consideration with the swarthy troop. The Moorish king, whose countenance was certainly anything but attractive, opened his thick, red lips, and shouted a command to the leaders of the lions, to stop their animals, that he might take a longer and closer survey of the strangers.

It so happened that one of the lions, having received a blow on the nose from his keeper, opened his jaws, exposing his long fangs, and rough, blood-red tongue, and gave vent to a short, sullen growl, with which the air resounded. The beast repeated the growl longer and more vehemently, when Baldasser's horse reared in affright, and those of his followers shrank and trembled at the unaccustomed sound. The keeper punished the lion by a second blow, heavier than the first, from an iron staff, and the beast testified his increasing wrath by a deafening roar,

and a savage lashing of his tail. The noise was so fearful, that the Germans had need of all their courage to maintain their outward quiet and composure. The Asiatics and Africans, on the contrary, as well as the elephants, uttered shrill cries of terror, many of them taking speedy flight. The lion becoming at every moment more enraged, and its great four-legged neighbors manifesting much fear and uneasiness, the keeper hastened to throw over his charge a strong net, which he had held in reserve, and which was intended to render the beast harmless.

In this, however, he was not successful, for the furious beast rent the net fiercely with his claws, and rising on his hind legs in order to free himself from his remaining bonds, he caused the chariot to rock violently backward and forward. At the Moorish king's loud call for help, a number of his followers attacked the lion with their wea-

pons, but quickly fled, or fell to the ground, scattered like spray before his vigorous teeth and claws. In the wild confusion that ensued, Baldasser imagined for a moment, that the great yellow cat had sprung up behind him on his horse; but on turning quickly, he found that the agile leaper was not the lion, but the black king, who clung tightly to him, and craved his protection with imploring looks and gestures. But in another instant, when Baldasser would have tried to reassure him, he sprang to the ground again, even more quickly than he had mounted. Only too soon did the German king learn the cause of this sudden movement. For, with one terrible bound, the lion had fastened himself to the neck of his noble steed, burying his sharp fangs in the flesh, so that the horse plunged and snorted madly. Retaining his self-possession, Baldasser struck the lion in the eye with the

point of his sceptre, so that the animal, uttering a roar of pain, let go his hold. The king instantly snatched his stone battle-axe from his girdle, raised himself aloft in his stirrups, and let the heavy weapon descend upon the head of the doomed beast. It was evident, from the fearful crash, that the skull was broken by the blow. The lion fell lifeless to the ground, and groaned out his life under the lances of the German warriors.

Baldasser now had leisure to look around; of course, his first thought was of his child. What he most feared was indeed the case: Erna was moving her arms convulsively, laughing and singing by turns. The African king was near her, trying to hide himself under the furs that covered the litter, trembling with terror, his crown having been lost in the tumult. Quiet having been gradually restored, he again took his place in his

chariot, to which two horses were now harnessed, instead of the lions. The scattered procession was brought once more into line, the music re-commenced, and Baldasser, having dismounted from his bleeding horse, at a sign from the Moorish king to take his place beside the latter in his chariot, now proceeded, followed by his Germans, toward the palace where the king of Persia awaited his brother monarchs.

It must here be mentioned, that at the moment of the greatest danger, Perinthes, following the Moorish king with his eagle eyes, had seen the costly crown fall from the head of the terrified monarch. At the risk of his life he had seized the precious jewel under the very feet of the terrified, trampling horses, and was about concealing it in the folds of his garment, when he found himself observed by the Israelite, Esaias.

"Perinthes," said the latter, with a smile, "the crown becomes thee as little as this sceptre does me," holding up the ornamental wand which Baldasser had cast away during the struggle with the lion, and Esaias had picked up. "Let us restore them to their rightful owners."

Perinthes could have killed the Israelite, and perhaps would have done so, had he been in possession of his dagger. Muttering curses, he reluctantly followed Esaias, who hastened to restore the sceptre to Baldasser. With bitterness only half concealed by assumed reverence, but with many obsequious words, he surrendered the diadem to the Moorish king.

"King Melchior will reward thee, O white man!" said the Moor, displaying two rows of glittering white teeth behind his red lips, as he replaced the crown upon his head. "What is thy name?"

"My name, O mighty ruler, is Perinthes," returned the Greek, in an abject tone; "I am the interpreter of the white king."

"It is well," replied Melchior. "My eyes will find thee again, and the sunshine of my favor shall light upon thee."

At the entrance of the palace, while the yellow king Caspar welcomed his dark brother with royal ceremony, Baldasser turned to the Israelite, and said, with deep feeling:

"Esaias! I commit to thee the protection of my child and the women. Tell my men to take care of my faithful horse, and of the healing of his wounds."

The king was prevented from any further communication with Esaias by King Caspar, who addressed him with compliments upon his bravery, and inquired as to the situation and welfare of his distant realm. It need scarcely be said, that all conversation among

the three kings was carried on through interpreters.

It was quite evident that Baldasser, in his simple attire, and with his small retinue, commanded more respect than the Moorish king with all his splendor and his countless attendants.

The barbarian king and his party were provided with a sumptuous suite of apartments in Caspar's palace. The latter was much elated by the thought that two kings, one from the far-off north, and one from the southern land of Africa, had come to visit him,— an event which would ever be memorable in the annals of his country, and which would reflect the highest honor upon his reign.

CHAPTER VIII.

ASTROLOGY.

ERNA thought herself in a land of wonders. All that surrounded her was new and incomprehensible. Different from those at home were all the trees and plants, the flowers and fruits; different, all the animals; different the people, their clothing, their habitations, their manners and customs. She marvelled at the high, firm walls of polished marble that enclosed her room; at the air turned to stone, yet still transparent—the glass; at the soft, yielding, wonderfully shining silken stuffs, that were used in such lavish profusion about her couch, and for the clothing of her new attendants. She watched with wondering

eyes the agile and comical antics of what seemed an ugly child covered all over with hair, — an ape; and admired the brilliant feathers of an Indian parrot, that screamed on his golden perch, and thrust forth his large hooked beak to beg for food. But more wonderful than all else was a little black boy who was placed among Erna's retinue, and was the object of inexhaustible curiosity to the Germans. It seemed to them impossible that his color could be natural, and Erna's female attendants subjected the little fellow to numerous washings and rubbings, in order to ascertain the truth; to all of which he submitted with laughing good humor. The same experiment was tried upon the yellowish-brown skin of an Asiatic waiting-maid, and of course with as little success. While Erna passed her time partly in her rooms and partly in the magnificent palace-gardens, in

ever varied amusements, the three kings employed themselves in hunting, or in watching combats between animals, or of men with animals; sometimes the Asiatics and Africans would try their strength against each other; but in such contests, both found themselves outdone by the Germans.

Day after day passed in these and similar diversions, until Baldasser began to weary of them.

"Let us continue our journey," he said to Esaias. "Did I leave my country and my people to spend my days here in idle amusements? Arise, O Hebrew! conduct me to thy fatherland; bring me to those waters that are to restore health to my child and happiness to my life."

"I hear thy commands with joy, O king," answered Esaias. "We may depart to-morrow morning, to accomplish the last — and least — portion of our journey. Acquaint

thy royal host with thine intention, and let us make our preparations without delay."

When, in accordance with the counsel of the Hebrew, the king gave Caspar notice of his intended departure, the latter, after a fruitless attempt to induce him to remain yet longer, said:

"Thy will be done, my kingly brother! Let me first inquire of the stars, whether thy journey will be attended with a happy result."

"Of the stars?" repeated Baldasser, in astonishment; "do the stars of thy country speak?"

"Not so," replied Caspar. "But there is a secret science—that of Astrology—by which the initiated may read the future, with at least tolerable accuracy, in the stars. I have applied myself for some years to the study of this science, and I know no greater pleasure than that of reading the bright stars in the

heavens. Every distinguished man, every king or ruler, receives at his birth a star, the position and course of which indicates the good or ill fortune of him who is born under it. Tell me, my brother, the region of the sky under which thy kingdom lies, the year, the day, and the hour of thy birth, that I may seek thy star in the heavens."

Baldasser was about to reply, that he could not answer any but the first inquiry, when Melchior, who was present, interrupted the colloquy by saying to Caspar:

"My royal brother, of what service is it to mortals to inquire into the future, seeing that it is not in their power to change it in the least particular? Astrology, therefore, seems to me of less moment than the discovery of the philosopher's stone, which is the chief object of my desires, the wonderful stone which has the power of conferring immortality on its possessor. I acknowledge that

this quest is the motive of my visit here; I have hoped to receive some aid from thee, or from thy wise men."

"This also will I ask of the stars," said Caspar, "whether thou mayst attain thine object here, and how. Let us, to-night, ascend my watch-tower, and summon all my astrologers."

The night came, cloudless and still. On the flat roof of the highest tower of the royal dwelling stood a circle of long-bearded magi, clothed in white garments, impatiently awaiting the arrival of the three kings. When at last they ascended the winding stairway and came upon the roof, the magi prostrated themselves before them.

"Hail! all hail to our mighty king and his royal guests!" they cried, in chorus. "The heavens themselves rejoice over this conjunction of lofty potentates; a new star of wondrous magnitude and of purest light

has appeared. He who is born under it is destined to be the fourth in this glorious Union, that the morning and the evening, noon and midnight, may be joined in friendly harmony!"

"Where? where is the new star?" inquired Caspar, eagerly.

The magi pointed to the western sky, where indeed shone a new and brilliant luminary.

"Behold it," they said. "Happy the land and the nation over which it has arisen,—happy will they be, under the rule of their new-born king!"

"What is the country called, which lies in that direction?" inquired Caspar.

The science of Geography was but little known in those days. Some named one kingdom, some another. Perinthes, who with Esaias was in attendance upon Baldasser, boldly averred that the new star

could be nowhere but above Ionia, in Asia Minor, where stood the renowned city of Ephesus. But Esaias said:

"The Almighty God, who made heaven and earth, and all that in them is, by the word of His power, promised my forefather, Abraham, that in him should all the nations of the earth be blessed. It is true that He had created the first man after His own image, and placed him in a delightful region, where he might have lived happy and immortal."

"Immortal!" interrupted Melchior. "Ha! was the first man, then, in possession of the philosopher's stone?"

"He possessed more than that," replied Esaias, — "the grace and the favor of our God! But thankless man desired to make himself like God, — the creature to rival the Creator."

"It was the Titans," Perinthes interrupted,

with a sneer, "who would have stormed heaven, and snatched Jupiter from his throne!"

"Peace, with thy superstitious fables!" said Esaias, "of which thou thyself hast often spoken to me with incredulity. Jehovah punished the first human beings," continued he, "for their ingratitude and presumption, by driving them from Paradise, and pronouncing upon them the sentence of a life of labor, to be ended by death. For when once sin had entered the world, death of necessity followed; otherwise, men would have rushed, without fear or restraint, into ever-increasing wickedness and misery."

"And what became of the philosopher's stone?" asked Melchior; "did the first man guard it with so little care as to lose it?"

"He did, indeed, through sin, lose the philosopher's stone," replied the Hebrew, "which is none other than the image and

likeness of God. But Jehovah has promised that a man shall rise from the seed of Abraham, who shall restore that likeness to earth. For him, the Anointed One, the Saviour, my people wait in faith, and with longing desire; already have they beheld the fulfilment of that which our father Jacob prophesied before his death."

"Prophesied?" repeated Caspar. "Was he able to look into the future?"

"Verily," replied Esaias, "do we possess many books in which the future is foretold; and a large part of these prophecies have been fulfilled, Hear what our father Jacob said in his vision: 'The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.' The sceptre *has* departed from Judah; for King Herod is a descendant of Esau," said Esaias, mournfully, "and my people are

under the power of the Romans;—the time is fulfilled that the Messiah should appear. Welcome, thou glorious Star!" he exclaimed, stretching out his arms toward the sky; "welcome, thou new-born King of my people! to Thee shall the gathering of the people be! Thou wilt cause Israel once more to dwell under her own vine and fig-tree, free and powerful and great, as in the days of David and of Solomon!"

The kings and the astrologers stood in silence around the Israelite, who had fallen on his knees, and, still extending his arms toward Heaven, was absorbed in half audible prayer. Dark and silent beneath them lay the great city, with its countless dwellings. Scarcely distinguishable, the river wound in and out under the shadows of night: but so much the more sublime and entrancing was the illimitable firmament, with its myriad worlds of light, that shone with undimmed

lustre from afar, rejoicing the hearts of men with presentiments of a blessed though mysterious future.

All in silence yielded themselves for a time to its pure and holy influence. Caspar at length said, turning to Baldasser:

"It is thy intention, my brother, to visit the land of Judæa?"

"Yes, my brother," replied Baldasser. "According to the account of Esaias, that land possesses waters of wonderful healing power, from which I hope for the restoration of my daughter's health."

"I should not be unwilling to accompany thee," Caspar continued. "I am sure, in the first place, that I should meet with many adventures, in which I should be glad of a companion as valiant as thou art, my brother. Then, I would like to see this newborn king, and his father, who must certainly be a great monarch himself, and whose

friendship might prove of the greatest use to me and to my kingdom. And besides, I long to see those prophetic books, of which thy interpreter has spoken. I would learn from them something more of the future. What sayest thou, my royal brother Melchior?"

"That I would gladly make one of the company," replied the African king. "I know that the difference between the road through Judæa, and that by which I came, is not very great, as to distance, and I shall be glad of a variation in the route. And, moreover, I hope for something greater. If the Hebrew has not deceived us, the new-born king, or his father, must be in possession of the philosopher's stone; and perhaps, by paying a great sum, I may obtain it."

"Well," rejoined Caspar. "Together, then, let us go in quest of this philosopher's stone. But we will travel as wise men, not as kings.

I have long desired to lay aside for a while the oppressive burden of royalty, and to try life without crown or sceptre. As magi, too, we may journey more rapidly and conveniently than as kings. Were we to arrive among the Jews with all our guards and attendants, they might fear that we came as enemies, and call upon the Romans against us. Those Romans! I fear them above all else, for were they to learn that we are kings, they would surely seize us, and take possession of our kingdoms."

Esaias, ever watchful, observed that at these words the countenance of the Greek suddenly lighted up with a cunning and triumphant smile.

"I will send back my retinue," said Melchior, "and retain only two or three servants."

"I intend to do the same," said Caspar.

"I cannot separate, either from my child, or from my people," Baldasser said.

"Nor needest thou to do so, my brother," replied Caspar. "But thou mayst divide thy followers into small companies, and thus avoid all unnecessary display."

To this, Baldasser consented, and it was arranged that they should set forth on the second day after.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ATTACK.

THE three kings journeyed across the region of Asia Minor. Caspar and Melchior, having laid aside all the insignia of royalty, their silken robes, precious stones and gold, were clothed in the usual garb of magi, or "wise men." The simple golden circlet, and the sceptre of Baldasser, together with his panther-skin, were stored among the baggage of the Israelite; his attire, with these exceptions, was too little conspicuous to need any other changes. Melchior's horse was white; Caspar had chosen a small, swift-footed brown horse; and that of Baldasser was, as we already know, black. Immediately behind the kings rode their three

interpreters, and these were followed at a little distance by as many soldiers, representatives of all the then known divisions of the earth,—Europe, Asia, and Africa.

"Everything has two sides," Caspar began. "As king, I often suffered from weariness, and from loathing of even the rarest dainties. I was subject to fits of ill-humor, during which nothing could cheer me, or give me pleasure. As a philosopher, I find myself contented and happy, and I know not why. I have a good appetite, and can eat food which formerly I would not have deigned to touch. All this is the bright side. But there is quite another view: no one keeps off the flies and other troublesome insects from me; the sun shines full in my face; I am stiff and uncomfortable from our long rides, and cannot have a quiet room and a soft bed to rest upon, no matter how fatigued I may be. If only I am compen-

sated for all these privations,—if I may but return home better acquainted with the future, I shall be well content."

"Ugh!" said King Melchior, shaking himself. "How cold these northern countries are! I am almost chilled enough to turn white, like my royal brother from Europe. The sun seems to have lost all its heat! Ugh!"

"Here, my brother," said Baldasser, loosening his bear-skin mantle, and throwing it over the shoulders of the Moorish king. "Thou wilt do me a great kindness if thou wilt make use of my cloak. I feel as if I must steam, as my horse does; he is as little accustomed to heat as is his master. Permit me, my brothers, to halt here for a little while, and to see my child. There is neither town nor village near us now, so that we may call our party together without exciting suspicion. I should like to inquire whether all

have passed the city near which our road led, some hours ago, without attracting the observation of its Roman garrison."

Caspar dismounted, complaining that his limbs were quite stiffened. He sought a well-shaded, grassy spot, and lay down with a sort of groan, beckoning to his servant to bring him a full wine-skin, from which he refreshed himself by copious draughts. Melchior lay at full length in the sun, and called for a beverage with hot spices, to warm his chilled blood. But Baldasser rode to the top of a hill, and looked in the direction from which his daughter and her attendants should come. One by one, all the small divisions of the travelling party came together,—only Perinthes and two Germans were missing.

"Where is the Greek?" asked Baldasser.

"A Roman soldier met us," replied the leader of the German company, "and Pe-

rinthes — so he told me — inquired of the soldier about our road, how far we had to go, and what was the distance from Ephesus. I have no confidence in him, so I left two of our men to watch him. Behold, king! they come at full speed."

It was indeed so. Esaias looked thoughtful, but said nothing. King Baldasser turned away, and devoted his whole attention to his daughter, whose appearance betokened great improvement in her condition, a circumstance which gave much joy to her loving father.

"After an hour passed in repose, the party resumed their journey, without separating again, for evening was approaching, at which time they always re-united for the night. On the way, Esaias, who did not once lose sight of the Greek, observed that he rode as near as possible to every tree, stone, or other object that stood in a conspicuous

position by the road, letting the point of his weapon fall against it as if by accident, but in such a manner as to leave a perceptible mark. This gave the Israelite room to ask him the question:

"Perinthes, dost thou suppose that we shall return by the same road, that thou art so careful to mark it?"

"It is not impossible," replied the Greek, affecting indifference, but secretly biting his lips, and taking care to repeat his manœuvre less frequently and with greater caution.

About dusk, they sought out a place sheltered from the cool night-winds, and erected tents for the kings and for Erna. The Germans disposed themselves near that occupied by Baldasser, placing their horses and their long lances near them. Before Caspar retired to rest, he carefully examined the stars, particularly that of the new-born King of the Jews.

"The position of the stars," he remarked to Baldasser and Melchior, "promises us a fortunate night."

This expression called a satirical smile to the countenance of the Greek, which he imagined unobserved, but which did not escape the watchful eye of Esaias. The Israelite lay down near Perinthes, but did not go to sleep. His vigilance was indeed necessary. No sooner was all quiet in the camp, than Perinthes raised his head and listened. Then he crept on his hands and knees from his place, but not until he had lingered for a few seconds, irresolute whether he should kill the Israelite at once, or not. At the same moment, Esaias himself was in doubt whether he should seize the traitor and raise an alarm, or whether he should await his further motions. He decided upon the latter course, and watched Perinthes go to the horses, cut their halters, and then remove

the lances to another spot, which Esaias particularly noted.

All this accomplished, Perinthes stole silently and quickly out of the camp. As speedily, Esaias awoke his sleeping companions, counselling them to quiet and caution, and acquainting them with the treachery of the Greek. The lances were brought back, the other weapons and the horses put in readiness for service, as far as possible; and then, in silence, all awaited further developments.

To the German king, whose only anxiety was for his child, Esaias said, in a tone which inspired confidence:

"As the Lord my God liveth, I will protect thy daughter, and restore her to thee, come what may."

And now, at last, the betrayer Perinthes returned, guiding a party of Roman soldiers, and found, not men defenceless and sunk in

the unconsciousness of sleep, but a well-disciplined, courageous, well-armed band, who received the attack with an effective resistance.

The struggle was a fierce one, for the Romans, though inferior in numbers, were not willing that the glory of their military fame should be tarnished by defeat, especially at the hands of a little party of northern barbarians, who, on their part, fought with their usual fearless bravery, for the sake of their king and his only child.

The spot, heretofore so peaceful, resounded with the wild din of conflict — the enraged cries of the combatants, the terrified screams of the women and children, the groans of the wounded. At last, German strength achieved the victory over the already degenerate Roman soldiery. The assailants bled under the thrusts of lances and the blows of heavy battle-axes. Up to this

time, only German arms had contended with the Romans. Now, as the miserable wounded remnant of the assailants were creeping away from the scene of conflict, the few Asiatics and Africans in the party slaughtered them to a man, that none might be left to carry home the news of their disgraceful defeat.

If Baldasser, in the heat of the struggle, could have heard his daughter's cries for help, he would have hastened to her side, for it was for her sake alone that his arm performed wonders of strength and courage. So much the more agonizing were his feelings, when, the contest being ended, he called Erna, but called in vain; no trace could be found of her or of her two women. Nor was Esaias to be found; he, as well as Perinthes, had disappeared under the cover of night; which circumstance would have seemed to involve him in the treachery of

the Greek, had not his effective assistance in preparing for the defence of the camp averted suspicion from him. Perhaps the next day would clear up the mystery.

The light of returning day made manifest the losses that both parties had sustained. Only three Germans were found among the dead; their long lances having served to keep their opponents at a distance. Although scarcely any of the Germans had escaped without wounds, they all exulted in their victory over the world-renowned, the dreaded Romans. While the Asiatics and Africans, from motives of prudence, buried their slain opponents, the Germans interred the bodies of their brethren with solemn ceremony, to which the presence of their king lent peculiar dignity. In searching the vicinity for the women and children, they found, one after another, the two women, and Erna's playmates, Odo and Her-

mina, but of herself no trace, nor yet of the Israelite.

According to the women's account, Erna had been carried off by the Greek, from whom they had vainly tried to rescue her. Then they had left the battle-ground, and wandering in the woods, had become separated, and had lost themselves. Hermina, who had remained longest near Erna, asserted that Esaias had fought for her against Perinthes, and that at last both of the men and the child had disappeared in the darkness. Baldasser would have gone with his men in search of the child, but Caspar said earnestly to him:

"Not so, my royal brother! Thou mayest not forget that thou hast solemnly promised to journey with us, and to give us the protection of thy soldiers, until we shall have found the new-born King of the Jews. Thou wilt not break thy royal word, my brother,

now that Greek treachery has raised the enmity of the Romans against us."

Baldasser bowed his head in silent assent. His heart bled, but he answered not a word. And so the journey was resumed in the direction of the star.

CHAPTER X.

THE LAND OF JUDÆA.

THE travellers reached the land of Judæa without further misfortune,—yet was Baldasser most unhappy.

"Where and how are we to find the new-born King of the Jews," said Melchior, "since the Hebrew who was our guide, and who alone knew the country, has disappeared? The star indeed shows us the quarter of the heavens under which we may find the royal child, but not the exact spot."

"Where?" Caspar replied; "a strange question, my brother! Wherever the royal father lives, there of course we shall find the infant. The city of the king is Jerusalem,—thither must we direct our steps. I am curious to know whether this Jerusalem can

compare with my Ispahan. What I have seen of the land of Judæa, thus far, does not raise my anticipations very high. Ho! Pombus! ask that countryman the name of yonder river!"

"It is the Jordan, O king," said the interpreter, after obeying the command of Caspar.

The name awoke Baldasser from his reverie, the subject of which, as we may easily conceive, was his lost child. The Jordan! That name stood in too close connection with his daughter Erna, for Baldasser to pass it by with inattention. The Jordan, of which Esaias had related so many wonderful things! The Jordan, that wonderful stream, which had healed the Syrian captain by his seven times repeated bathing in its waves! The Jordan, which was to cure Erna's disease also. And there at that point it flowed, an insignificant stream, between

low and sandy banks — its waters so turbid and troubled, could they yet possess such miraculous virtue?

Arrived at its banks, Caspar inquired:

"Must we cross the river?"

"Yes, my king!" replied his interpreter.

"But I see neither bridge nor vessel to carry us over," objected Caspar. "A poor reception, indeed, for three royal magi, who have undertaken so long a journey to greet a new-born king. What wilt thou do, my silent brother Baldasser?"

The German king had already guided his horse into the stream, and replied:

"As thou seest, my brother, I will cross the stream."

Caspar and Melchior regarded each other inquiringly. The Germans, meanwhile, followed their king; even the two women, with Hermina and Odo, rode fearlessly into the water. Caspar looked irresolutely for a few

minutes at his small horse, comparing it with those of the Germans. Shame at last overcame his hesitation. He beckoned to his followers to keep as close as possible to him, and gave spurs to his horse. Melchior and his attendants followed, and the Jordan was soon covered with swimming horses, whose riders, according to their degree of courage, wore tranquil or anxious countenances. All, however, reached the opposite bank in safety, where the brown and the black kings paused to congratulate themselves upon this almost unexpected good fortune.

"Ugh!" said Melchior, shivering, while he put on his dry clothing. "If any one deserves to find the philosopher's stone, it is I. I risk losing my life for it, in my quest of immortality."

"May the writings of the Hebrews teach me to know the future more truly than did the stars the other night, when I looked for

a peaceful night's rest, and was disturbed by those Roman soldiers!" exclaimed Caspar.

Baldasser, on his part, knelt down upon the bank, and dipped his head seven times into the waters of the Jordan.

"I do it for my Erna," he said, within himself; and remounting his horse, he went on his way in silence.

A few days later, the travellers reached the vale of Salem, where Melchisedek had, long ago, met the victorious Abraham on his homeward march, had brought him bread and wine, and had blessed him. Here was the lofty city, Jerusalem, with all its houses and palaces, seated imposingly on its three hills, and surrounded by its ever memorable mountains. There, as if enthroned, was the royal habitation of Zion, where David had so often touched his harp. Now, alas! Roman soldiers walked its streets, looking proudly around upon the city that paid

tribute to their imperial master. There towered the majestic Temple, the witness of the changeful history of the people of Israel. The golden ornaments of its walls shone in the evening sun, awakening the avarice of the Roman hirelings.

There, where afterwards Christ the Lord wept compassionate tears over the city and its blinded inhabitants, now stood the proud Caspar, as he exclaimed:

"And yet, this city cannot compare with Ispahan!"

Melchior took a palm-branch to drive off the insects that assailed him, and said:

"Brother Caspar, where are our lion-drawn chariots? our litters? our elephants? our slaves? No one celebrates our royal entrance into the city: we slip in here like beggars, — we, who should have a far different reception. And how still the city is! Dost thou hear any sound of rejoicing over

the birth of the young king? What if this star has misled us, as thine astrology did thee but lately?"

Baldasser stood by with inattentive ear. For him Jerusalem, the city of Zion, the Temple, had no charms. His eyes sought eagerly and only — the pool of Bethesda! Ah, he cherished the secret hope that there he might find his child, under the care of Esaias,—and perhaps too restored to health! He could scarcely control his impatience to hasten to the wonderful pool. No sooner had they reached an inn, than he set out quickly toward the sheep-gate, in search of it.

Evening was already approaching, when he found the spot so eagerly longed for. He entered a circle of stone porches, where he beheld with pain, almost with terror, such a scene as had never before presented itself to his eyes, certainly not in Germany. He

seemed in a great battlefield, where disease, that fearful enemy of humanity, had prostrated its defenceless victims, weeping and groaning, and uttering agonizing prayers for aid.

In whatever direction Baldasser looked, he saw beings of every age, sex, and nation, from whom pain extorted loud lamentations, or half-suppressed sighs. Everywhere was the livid image of death. And from the dark porches, and from the couches of anguish within them, the unhappy creatures watched with eager, longing eyes, a certain little pool, in order that they might perceive the first troubled motion of its quiet waters, when touched by some invisible messenger from Heaven.

Whether it was delusion or reality, some one who stood by, while Baldasser lingered in this abode of sorrow, thought he saw the waters stir, and on his proclaiming this

aloud, a scene of eager competition as to who should first reach the pool, arose among the afflicted throng. The sick appeared to have become suddenly well, and their limbs, but a moment before so enfeebled, to have been endowed with new vigor. Every one strove in haste to leave his couch, in order to be the first in the pool. On they pressed, shoving and pushing, crawling and creeping upon their hands and knees. All around the astonished Baldasser the ground appeared covered with panting and groaning human beings, who seemed rather to be fleeing from some death that menaced them, than hastening toward an expected cure. The German was still standing, lost in silent wonder, when a beseeching voice fell upon his ear.

"Alas, O stranger!" it said, in plaintive tones, "pity an unhappy wretch, who has lain for more than six years here upon a bed

of pain. There is no one to take me to the pool when the water is stirred, and if, after unspeakable sufferings, I reach its edge, another has gone into it before me! Thou art so strong and healthy,—oh, I pray thee, carry me to the pool!"

Baldasser raised the crippled, groaning paralytic from his couch, and bore him in his powerful arms to the pool, as speedily as the struggling crowd would permit. And now he saw the pool glittering before him,—already a joyful exclamation hovered upon the lips of the impotent man, when a sudden fall and a loud splash in the water was heard. The cry of joy changed to one of woe—the pushing, hurrying crowd to petrified images, some of whose countenances preserved the stillness of despair; then broke out loud lamentations, muttered curses, or futile threats against the successful one, who had outrun the rest, and first reached

the water. With slow, painful efforts the poor wretches returned again to the beds they had so eagerly left; and Baldasser laid down his poor, despairing burden, and hurried away from the scene of distress, without having discovered his lost child.

On reaching the inn, he met Caspar, who approached him with a clouded brow.

"The new star and its vanished interpreter," said the king of Ispahan, "have entirely deceived us. No one here knows anything of a new-born King of the Jews. What are we to do? Since we are here, we must visit the king, I think, and ask some information of him. My confidence in astrology is much shaken; I fear all my soothsayers are but flatterers and impostors. Dost thou not think even so of thine Esaias, my brother?"

What Baldasser had just witnessed was scarcely calculated to confirm his faith in

the Israelite's accounts of the wonders of Judæa. He had found the river Jordan, and the Pool of Bethesda, entirely different from what he had imagined them. Caspar's words snatched from him the last lingering hope.

"I have fulfilled my promise," he replied, sadly, "and now, my brother, let me go in search of my child. What to me is any other star than the light in Erna's blue eye? What is to me a new-born King of the Jews, if I must return home bereaved of my darling child? Let me seek my beloved daughter, — and if I find her not, let me die!"

"Thou art not yet quite released from thy promise," returned Caspar. "We must first learn from this Jewish king's own lips whether we are deceived or not. We will seek him, therefore, early on the morrow."

The next day the three kings, accom-

panied by an interpreter, proceeded to the palace of King Herod. They sought admission in their assumed character of "wise men." Caspar and Melchior were each provided with a casket of valuable gifts intended for the new-born king. As with empty heart, so with empty hands, went Baldasser; for Esaias had taken with him the gold that remained, as well as the crown and sceptre.

Arriving at the house of King Herod, Caspar exclaimed, contemptuously:

"Truly, as king in Ispahan, I should have been ashamed to dwell in such a hovel as this! Such a miserable place—such poverty everywhere visible! What a difference between this royal residence and my palace, with its magnificent surroundings! Dost thou not perceive it, my white brother?"

Baldasser thought of his own simple habitation in the oak-woods of Germany, and sighed. There his child was with him, ill

though she was. What pleasure could the most lordly palace afford him without his Erna?

After announcing the purpose of their visit to King Herod, the three kings were left standing waiting in the outer court of the palace. This gave Caspar fresh ground of complaint.

"This Jewish king does not appear even to be acquainted with the customs of hospitality. No water to wash our feet, — no refreshment of any kind, — not even a cushion to rest upon!"

He had sufficient leisure to vent his contempt and vexation. After much unreasonable delay, several servants entered the court, bringing a sort of canopied throne, which they set under a colonnade that extended along the side of the palace, having an elevated pavement underneath it. At last, preceded and followed by a number of

attendants, King Herod himself appeared, in robes of royal purple, and seated himself under the canopy.

Herod's face was broad and red, his eyes small and gray, his person unwieldy, and, like his countenance, bloated with wine. He was probably over forty years of age. After regarding the strangers for a while with very curious and scrutinizing looks, he signified, by a gesture, that they were permitted to address him.

The kings approached with the customary Oriental salutation, pausing at the distance of some paces from King Herod, resting on the right knee upon the ground, and crossing the hands upon the bosom, and said:

"Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him."

Herod and his attendants were terrified.

"A new-born King of the Jews?" he ex-

claimed, turning pale. "Do ye not err? No son has as yet been born to me. How long may it be since this birth ye speak of?"

"Ah, thou miserable, beggarly king!" muttered Caspar. "I know how to repay thee for thy insulting reception! I will make thee so uneasy, that thou shalt think a fly to be an elephant! — We do not err, O mighty lord!" he said, aloud. "Too plainly did the large and brilliant star betoken the birth of a Jewish king. It is true, we cannot tell thee exactly the day and the hour of its appearance. It is perhaps a month or more since first we discovered that star in the firmament. It has gone before us, and led us into thy kingdom. All who behold it agree in believing, that the new-born king is destined to become great and powerful, and to behold all the nations of the earth at his feet. Therefore tell us, O king, where is he who is born King of the Jews, that we

may fall at his feet and worship him, and implore his protection!"

With malicious pleasure Caspar watched the growing anxiety of the King of Judæa, who turned in confusion first to his servants, then to the wise men.

"How the poor wretch trembles for his crown!" said Caspar, in a low voice, to his royal companions. "He already imagines himself driven from his throne, and deprived of his kingdom. Truly, the Jews have brought me no exaggerated accounts of their tyrannical ruler."

Meanwhile, Herod had somewhat recovered from his perplexity. To cover it, he affected sudden anger.

"Ye are deceived!" he cried, with a frown, "or ye are yourselves deceivers! I know no new-born King of the Jews, of my race, and no other will I recognize!"

Should we have come from far-off lands

on an errand of deceit?" answered Melchior. "Not to receive the wages of impostors,—nay, but to offer rich gifts, seek we the new-born king. Do impostors bear such things as these in their hands?"

Thus speaking, he opened the casket which he carried under his arm, exposing to Herod's greedy gaze the gold, pearls, and costly spices which it contained,—a sight which raised the astonishment, envy, and avarice of that unworthy monarch to the highest pitch.

"A wise man of thy people," resumed Caspar, "assured us that thou hast in thy possession those mysterious writings which give the most accurate information concerning this mighty and long-expected Ruler. And since we have been in thy kingdom, this report has been confirmed by thy subjects, although they have not been able to tell us when and where the subject of so

many tokens and prophecies should be born."

"Call hither the scribes!" commanded Herod, after reflecting for a few moments.

On the instant appeared a number of venerable men with long beards, and longer rolls of parchment, which, at the king's command, they spread out and began to examine.

"Say quickly," demanded Herod, impatiently, "where shall the promised and expected Messiah be born?"

And the scribes replied, with one accord:

"In Bethlehem of Judæa. For thus it is written by the prophet Micah: 'And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judæa, art not the least among the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come a governor that shall rule my people Israel.'"

"Go! go!" said Herod to the scribes; "we need you no further. — And ye, wise

men of the East, ye know where ye must seek. And when ye shall have found the new-born king, return and bring me word, that I too may hasten to worship him."

"Very sincere!" muttered Caspar. "Brother Melchior! Herod must think us fools, rather than wise men, if he imagines that we will believe such a tale. We, as kings, know full well what we should do, if such an event were to happen in our kingdoms. Mighty monarch," he said, addressing Herod, "where lies the town of Bethlehem? Is it far distant? for we are almost wearied out by our long journeying."

"Bethlehem is scarcely a day's journey from Jerusalem," replied Herod. "Go in peace, and forget not my request."

The kings departed.

"Well, my brother Baldasser," said Caspar, as they departed, "thou seest that thou mayst not yet leave us. Perhaps Bethlehem

may be larger than this Jerusalem, and the king who lives there a better and more powerful one than this Herod."

On the next day, the three kings again set out.

CHAPTER XI.

BETHLEHEM.

NO rude wintry blast swept over desolated plains and leafless trees; no snow covered the fields; no ice the brooks, rivers and ponds. The chorus of the feathered dwellers of the woods had not been silenced; no beast stiffened by the frost had burrowed under the earth, to sleep away a long and dreary season; no bird had winged its way to other and warmer lands. Far otherwise: bright butterflies flitted in the warm sunshine over blooming flowers, over green fields and meadows; and myriads of insects were still sporting merrily through the balmy air. It was a brighter and more joyous Christmas, that first one, than we

have, enlivened by nature as ours are, only by a few firs and hemlocks.

It was already dark when the three kings entered Bethlehem. So modest and quiet lay the little town asleep in the valley! And above its obscure dwellings was outspread so bright and fair a sky, filled with golden stars, and breathing a perfumed, springlike air! The crescent moon glowed in the horizon, and mysteriously, yet with winning, tranquil light, the star of the new-born king hung over the little village. The weary horses of the travellers trod, almost inaudibly and with drooping heads, the velvet floor of the turf; and their riders were as silent as they.

Even to the spirit of the German king the peaceful repose had reached. His heart bled less painfully for the disappearance of his child. He felt as he might have done when returning from a long war, or a

fatiguing hunt; as if the dark valley below, with its houses and trees, had been the oak-forest of his fatherland, where stood his modest dwelling; as if Erna might soon come joyfully springing forth to meet him.

It was Caspar who first broke the silence.

"There our star stands still," he said, with bitter irony; "there, beneath it, lies the magnificent royal city! Judging by its size, our infant prince may be the son of some honest countryman, his mother a servant, his palace a stable, his cradle a manger! Oh, Melchior! Melchior! what hope hast thou now of finding thy philosopher's stone? So far as I am concerned, the Jews may keep their sacred books, and their predictions!"

"For once I have now travelled half the world over, but never again will I do so!" Melchior rejoined, in the same spirit. "The cold almost stiffens me into stone. With what joy will I greet once more the sunlight

of my own kingdom, and the happy faces of my people! Were I but there!"

Baldasser said nothing; his thoughts were all with his lost child.

They soon reached the village, and stood before the inn.

"Ho there!" Caspar called to a maid-servant, who came out of the house. "Where shall we find the new-born King of the Jews? See, his star stands just above the house! Is he within?"

"Go seek him in the stable," replied the woman; "*there* is a new-born babe, of whom our shepherds have told a wonderful story. He is to be anointed,—but whether as king or as high-priest, who can tell?"

"This is indeed strange!" exclaimed Caspar, dismounting. "What if the prediction I made in jest should prove true? it would be still more wonderful. Follow me, good brothers!" he said to his companions, and they entered the stable.

A lamp, which hung from the beams of the roof, close by a stone pillar in the middle of the large building, was scarcely sufficient to light the stable, which was filled on all sides with domestic animals. Near the burdened camel stood the patient ass; the useful ox rested there, the spirited horse stamped, the quiet sheep chewed the cud. Most of these animals were taking the first sleep of the night, so that an almost unbroken stillness reigned throughout the dimly lighted place. The air streamed softly in through the many crevices in the walls, and caused the hanging lamp to swing slowly to and fro, so that its rays flitted from one object to another. In this dim chamber, near the animals, wearied travellers rested upon soft moss or hay, sleeping more sweetly than kings within their palace-walls.

The picture which we have so imperfectly portrayed was not without its effect upon

Caspar. More quietly and seriously than might have been expected from him, he approached the stone pillar, near which a man of grave and dignified appearance, and a young woman, were seated side by side, conversing in but half audible tones.

"Where is the new-born child?" asked Caspar, repressing a scornful smile; "where is the future King of the Jews? His star, which we saw in the far East, stands over this house. Is there indeed a wonderful infant here, as yonder maid-servant told us?"

"There lies the new-born child!" replied the young woman, pointing with the happy blush of sacred maternal love to the nearest manger, on which lay a tender infant, wrapped in white swaddling-clothes, and sleeping.

From the child, Caspar turned his astonished gaze to the mother, and asked abruptly:

"Whose is this child?"

"It is *my* child, O my lord!" replied the mother, in a tone of heartfelt joy.

"And art thou its father?" asked Caspar of the man.

"No, my lord!" he replied. "Jehovah, the Lord our God, is the father of the child. But this is my betrothed wife, Mary."

"Man, what is thy name — thy occupation?"

"I am a carpenter, and my name is Joseph."

"And who art thou?" pursued Caspar, turning to Mary, "and what is the history of thy child?"

"I am the lowliest handmaiden of the Lord," said the woman, with deep humility. "But Jehovah has regarded my low estate in mercy, so that henceforward all the children of men shall call me blessed. An angel of my God appeared unto me, and told me that my child should be great, and should be called the Son of the Highest; that the Lord

would give him the throne of his father David, and that he should rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there should be no end."

"This is most wonderful," murmured Caspar, shaking his head, and looking again and again at the manger. "A son of the gods," he went on, "his mother a low-born woman, his palace a stable, his cradle a manger! Let him reconcile all this who can!"

Turning again to the group beside him, Caspar saw that Baldasser had taken the sleeping infant from its strange bed, and was holding it tenderly in his arms; and that the mother had carefully drawn a linen cloth partly over the angelic countenance, lest the lamp-light should dazzle the little one's eyes.

Baldasser, finding in the child a young and tender image of the one he had lost, breathed loving kisses upon its cheeks and lips; after which he laid his right hand upon its head,

as if in blessing, bedewing it with warm tears. At this moment there was a slight rustling in a heap of dry hay close to them, and a German tongue murmured dreamily:

"Father!"

Baldasser trembled in every limb. Quickly he laid the infant in its mother's arms.

"What was that?" he asked in amazement, looking eagerly into the shadows around him.

"It is the stranger-child," replied Mary, gently. "Awake or asleep, she is always speaking of her father, whom she looks for hourly."

"A stranger-child?" repeated Baldasser, pale with excitement and hope.

"Yes!" replied the mother, "a pious Israelite committed her to our care a few days ago, telling us that her father would come and receive her from us."

Already was Baldasser kneeling beside his

child, his Erna, restored to him! In spite of the darkness, he had recognized her instantly.

"Erna, my sweet, my beloved, my lost child! have I indeed found thee?" he murmured, in a broken voice. He would not awaken the little girl, but he could not resist the temptation to stroke her hands and her cheeks, and gently to kiss her forehead. She stirred, — she awoke.

"Thou art come, my father!" she said, joyfully. "Oh, I should have known that thou wouldst soon come, if even Esaias had not told me so!"

"I have thee again, my child!" exclaimed Baldasser, joyously. "Whether healed or not, thou art restored to me!"

"Yes, yes, my father," Erna answered, "healed, entirely and forever, of my disease. The first time I took that little God-child in my arms, I felt the evil spirit of disease flee

from me. Since then, my speech is a constant song, and I dance as I walk; but I am singing songs of praise, and dancing for joy, because my blood flows so free and so healthy through my veins."

"And where is Esaias, that I may thank him?" asked Baldasser.

"He is gone, and will never return," answered Erna, "for he was a messenger of the gods,—an angel of the Lord, the good Mary says, to lead me to my Saviour. Yes, my father, the child is a Saviour, and so they call him Jesus."

"Oh, tell me how and why I find thee here," urged Baldasser.

"Whilst thou wert fighting with the Romans on that dreadful night," said Erna, "the false Greek came to me amid the confusion, and said that thou hadst commanded him to lead me to a safe place until the fight should be over, and that I must go without my wo-

men, so that the Romans should not discover my flight. This was all that I knew,—what happened afterward, I could not tell, for my disease attacked me, and I was unconscious. When I came to myself, it was day, and Perinthes was gone. Instead of him, I saw our good Esaias, who had hastened to save me, and had forced the Greek to take speedy flight. I did not know why Perinthes wanted to carry me off. Esaias told me that because thy care had prevented the Greek from escaping before, he had betrayed us to the Romans; and they had attacked us for the sake of the treasures which the other kings carried; and that he would have stolen me, partly to have revenge upon thee, and partly through vanity, to gain attention and respect in his own country by showing there the daughter of a German king. We tried in vain to find thee and thy party, and therefore concluded to follow the star, and seek the new-born king of the Jews, hoping thus to meet with thee."

"Didst thou cross the Jordan, my child?" asked Baldasser; "and didst thou bathe seven times therein?"

"I came over the Jordan, and washed seven times in its waters," replied Erna, "but did not find myself healed."

"Wert thou also in Jerusalem, and didst thou go into the pool of Bethesda?" Baldasser further inquired.

"No, my father; we journeyed without delay toward Bethlehem, for Esaias knew that in this place the Messiah must be born. Near the town we met with some shepherds, who were watching their flocks. They told us, that on a certain night, a bright light from heaven shone around them, and an angel announced to them the birth of the Saviour, whom they were to find in Bethlehem, lying in a manger. And, all at once, a great host of heavenly beings appeared with the angel, praising the God of the Israelites, and fore-

telling great joy to all mankind. The shepherds, that same night, sought out the child, and found all things just as the angel had told them. We, too, easily found this wonderful child, and then Esaias left me, saying that he must hasten to his own home. But I think, with the mother Mary, that heaven is Esaias's home, and that he is an angel. He left with me thy crown, thy sceptre, and the gold that remained. Here they are, my father!"

Here Erna closed her narrative.

From his daughter, Baldasser turned to the Holy Child, who was awake, and lay upon his mother's knee. There, also, Baldasser placed his crown, his sceptre, and his gold, then bowed in adoration before the babe, saying solemnly:

"Oh, thou Saviour of my child! graciously accept the offering of a poor heathen king! Reject not the gratitude of a father whom

Thou hast made happy, and let Thy blessing ever rest upon my child!"

He bowed his head over the Child, and reverently kissed the little hand stretched out toward the glittering gold. And Erna, kneeling beside her father, imitated his example. Erna's women and playmates, too, and the tall, powerful German soldiers,— all knelt around their king, and united their adoration with his.

Caspar touched his royal brother Melchior, and said in low tones:

"Should we allow ourselves to be surpassed in generosity by this poor barbarian king? We are rich enough, and we have carried these heavy caskets with us so long, that it will be a relief to part with them. For my part, I care little whether the child is or is not destined to become a king; at least let us not expose ourselves to the ridicule of our people; let us act as if his royal claims were proved."

Melchior nodded assent, and both kings knelt before the Holy Child, offering to him gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and doing reverence to him as to a future monarch. Their attendants followed their example, so that at last all, Europeans, Asiatics, and Africans, were bowed to the ground before the Redeemer of the world.

The Child Jesus gazed with his large, clear eyes upon the many strange figures before him; his mother's heart leaped within her for joy; for what mother does not regard the honor and happiness of her beloved child more than her own? And Mary's lips whispered adoringly:

"I am the handmaid of the Lord! He who is mighty has done great things to me, and blessed be His Name."

Joseph, the foster-father of the Saviour, regarded the kneeling kings and their attendants, and the golden gifts lying in the lap

of Mary, with folded hands and reverent silence.

The light of the lamp seemed to grow brighter and brighter, and to illumine all the dark corners of the stable; and now angelic figures hovered in the solemn radiance, and repeated in voices of ineffable sweetness their song of praise:

"Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men."

And not even the dumb beasts ventured to disturb the celestial music by a single discordant sound, but listened with ears erect, and in awed silence.

CHAPTER XII.

A GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE.

BALDASSER'S happiness was greater than he had ever before experienced; for we never learn to appreciate our blessings as they deserve until we have felt the pain of losing them for a while.

It seemed to the humble German king almost as if he were at home in his rude and unadorned dwelling. All here was more friendly, more homelike, than had been the stateliest palaces of Asia.

While Caspar and Melchior were reluctantly preparing to spend the night in the stable, Baldasser had already fallen into a quiet sleep beside his restored treasure,—his dear child; his right arm thrown protect-

ingly across her. And he dreamed that Esaias, in a radiant, angelic form, came to his side, and spoke to him:

"Baldasser! I have fulfilled the promise I made unto thee! Long since did the true Esaias, who fell a captive into thy hands, leave thee, to return to his home and friends. A messenger of the only true God, who loves all men as His children, I was sent forth to lead thee and thy child hither from thy fatherland, that Erna might be restored, and that thou mightest no longer sit in the valley and shadow of death. No more wilt thou permit that God's children shall serve false gods, or be sacrificed unto them. The living God has written His will on the heart of every human being. Consult thy conscience, and obey it, and worship Jehovah in spirit and in truth. But when the child Jesus shall grow up, He shall declare unto all men His heavenly Father's will, that the world may learn fully to know and to obey it.

"What thou in pious gratitude, and the other kings in idle vanity, hast given unto the child Jesus, will enable his parents to depart with him into Egypt, where he may be safe from the persecution of the cruel Herod. And because thou hast, with humble faith, adored the Son of God in all his present lowliness, Jehovah will bless thee to thy remotest posterity. Arise, Baldasser, lift up thine eyes, and thou shalt see the future of thy people!"

And Baldasser looked, and found himself standing in a well-known region of Europe, on a high mountain in his own country. The gloomy forests fell before his eyes, the wolves, bears, and other wild beasts fled, the marshes were dried up, or changed into navigable streams. Countless flocks and herds grazed on the flowery meadows, and over the fruitful fields passed the plough of the peasant, and his diligent hand dropped the golden grain into the brown furrows. No longer

bitter, wild fruit, nor sour sloes, but the sweet, generous fruits of Asia hung from the trees; even the noble vine clung lovingly to the steep hillsides. And everywhere arose comfortable dwellings; and countless villages, populous cities, arched bridges that boldly spanned the streams, and heaven-pointing spires everywhere covered the once wild and desolate land. And there, too, were glorious temples, from which floated forth the joyous anthem of faith:

"I believe in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary, Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; The third day he rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead."

And every knee bowed in adoration before the Holy One, who had lain in the lap

of Mary. And the voice of the preacher was heard, saying:

"Wherefore, O man, seekest thou the philosopher's stone, that thou mayest live forever? Behold, immortality is found,—for Christ has conquered Death, and he who believes in him, though he were dead, yet shall he live!"

And Baldasser looked again, and saw great ships, that crossed the foaming deep, and returned, laden with the treasures of distant lands. And once more he looked, and saw that in Asia and in Africa men still worshipped false gods, and offered bloody sacrifices to them. And he saw his white countrymen go forth to preach the gospel to their brown and black brethren, so that they conquered them with the peaceful and holy weapons of the gospel.

"Thus shall it be," said Baldasser's guide, Esaias, "that the first shall be last, and the last first."

Gradually these pictures faded from before Baldasser's eyes, giving place to an increasing, celestial light. And far above him, he heard the sound of heavenly music, and the song of the angels, saying:

"Children, love one another! for God is love, and he only who dwells in love dwells in Him! So shall peace be upon earth, as it is in heaven. Halleluia!"

With these sweet harmonies in his ears, Baldasser awoke.

He awoke to find his happiness no dream, as he had feared it might be. No,—asleep beside him indeed lay his child, restored to health and to his arms. And near him the infant Saviour rested on the bosom of his mother; while the grave and thoughtful Joseph, having already risen, was making preparations for that speedy, sad journey into Egypt, God having warned him so to do.

Once more Erna took the Christ-child, her Saviour, in her arms, and kissed him in

the fulness of her grateful love. Once more the German king knelt before him in reverence; and then the parting.

Without returning to Jerusalem, to fulfil the wish of the crafty Herod, the kings went each by the shortest road to his own home. Caspar turned to the East, Melchior toward his own country in the region of noon, Joseph and Mary with the Holy Child departed for Egypt, and Baldasser for the North. Before they parted, however, Caspar had managed, unobserved, to hide the valuable treasures that still remained in his casket among Erna's baggage, that the German king might not suffer from privation on his homeward journey, — an act of thoughtful kindness that atoned for many shortcomings in the Eastern monarch.

Baldasser arrived at home safe, after a prosperous journey, and was received with joy by his faithful people. The death of the high-priest, Mamuh, occurring soon after, rendered the abolition of idolatry and of

human sacrifices far easier for the king. What the king and his followers related to their countrymen, of the many things worthy of imitation which they had seen on their journey, as well as the example of Baldasser, prompted and encouraged the Germans to lay aside many deep-rooted prejudices, and to make many improvements in their customs and manner of living. So that, years later, Christianity, in its triumphant spread over the world, found among the countrymen of Baldasser a soil already well prepared for its growth.

Erna, whose malady never again returned, lived to be the joy of her father, and the mother of a strong and valiant race, whose descendants still live in

The Beloved Fatherland.

HISTORIC SKETCH.

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed;

and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.—MATT. ii. 1–12.

ALL that we really *know* of the visit of the "Wise Men" to the Infant Redeemer is contained in the above sacred narrative; and we would be sorry to have the young reader confound *a legend* with INSPIRATION. *A legend*, in the sense we use the term, is "a remarkable story, whether true or false, handed down from early times;" *an inspired history* comes direct from God, and is to be found only in the Bible. Our story of the "Three Holy Kings" is a German legend founded upon the Gospel

account; and while it gives us much that is not inspired, it yet tells us nothing that is at variance with the New Testament. Bible history is so concise that even of the life of our Saviour, of whom all who love him could not read too much, there is what seems to be so meagre an account that the Apostle John says: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." For this reason some of the best and most pious writers have composed stories founded upon Bible histories; stories which have been and will be read with ever increasing delight by old and by young.

Among these stories the legends of the "Three Holy Kings" occupy a prominent place. For hundreds of years many different traditions, more or less romantic, have

been written about "The Wise Men:" the one we present is, of course, to be regarded from a German point of view.

The old—once Roman, now German—city of Cologne claims to have in her Cathedral the skulls of these "Three Wise Men;" and it is but a few years since the celebration of the seven hundredth anniversary of the transfer of these remains from Milan. If any of our young friends ever go to Cologne, they will, of course, visit the celebrated Cathedral, where they can take a peep through the glass end of the rich case that contains what are said to be the skulls of the three famous "Magi," each skull having the name of its former owner inscribed upon it in letters of rubies. In front of the shrine they will find the following inscription in Latin:

"Here repose the bodies of the three holy 'Magi,'
From which nothing has been taken, or is elsewhere placed."

About these relics are told many curious tales, which we have not room to insert here.

The following extract from an article in the "London Quarterly Review," embracing a number of old-time legends, collected by Johannes Von Hildesheim, in 1375, illustrates the traditionary beliefs that prevailed in the church long before there was such a word as PROTESTANT:

"The prophecy that a star should rise in Jacob, having proceeded from a heathen prophet, the heathens themselves became interested in its fulfilment; and watch was kept from a tower on a high hill in India where twelve astrologers observed the heavens night and day. When the time was come, a brilliant star was seen to rise in the east, which shed a light all over the land, and was as bright as the sun. And the star bore within it the figure of a little child, and the sign of the cross, and a voice came from it saying, 'To-day is there born a king in Judea.' And this star was seen over all India, and the people rejoiced, and no one doubted that it was the same of which Balaam had prophesied.

India included three regions, each separated from the other by high mountains. One of these was Arabia, the soil of which is quite red with the quantity of gold it contains, and here Melchior was king. The second was Godolia, of which part is called Saba, where frankincense is so abundant that it flows out of the trees, and Balthazar ruled there. And the third, India, contained the kingdom of Tharsis, where myrrh hangs so plentifully on the bushes that as you walk along it sticks to your clothes, and here Caspar reigned. But as they were best known by the gifts they brought, the Scriptures only mention them as the kings of Tharsis, Arabia, and Saba.

"Now each of the kings saw the star and determined to follow it, but no one of the three knew anything of his neighbor's intentions. So each set off with a numerous retinue, and the whole way, though beset with mountains and rivers, was equally dry and level to them, and they neither ate nor drank, nor rested nor slept, neither they nor their servants, nor their horses nor their cattle, but followed the star without ceasing. In this manner the whole journey only occupied them thirteen days, though it took them two years to return. 'And whoever doubts this let them read,' says the little book, 'in the prophet Daniel, where Habakkuk was taken by the hair of his head, and transported from Jerusalem to Babylon in one hour.' (Bel and the Dragon, ver. 36.)

"But when they were come within two miles of Jerusalem, the star disappeared, and a heavy fog arose, and each party halted: Melchior, as it fell out, taking his stand on Mount Calvary, Balthazar on the Mount of Olives, and Caspar just between them, and when the fog cleared away, each was astonished to see two other great companies besides his own, and then the kings first discovered that all had come upon the same errand, and they embraced with great joy, and rode together into Jerusalem. There the crowd of their united trains was so great, that they looked like an army come to besiege the city, and Herod and all Jerusalem were troubled.

"And the strangers inquired for Him that was born King of the Jews, whose star they had seen in the east, and were directed, as the Scriptures relate, to Bethlehem. And the star again went before them, and stood over a miserable hut. In this hut lay the infant Jesus, now thirteen days old, with his mother Mary, who was stout in figure, and brown in face, and had on an old blue robe. But the kings were splendidly attired, and had brought great treasures with them, for it must be known that all that Alexander the Great left at his death, and all that the Queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon, and all that Solomon collected for the Temple, had descended to the Three Kings from their ancestors who had pillaged the Temple of Jerusalem, and

all this they had now brought with them. But when they entered this miserable hut, it was filled with such an exceeding light, that for fear and amazement they knew not what they did; and they each offered quickly the first things that came to their hands and forgot all their other gifts.

"Melchior offered thirty golden pennies; Balthazar gave frankincense, and Caspar myrrh; but what the Virgin said to them they quite forgot, and only remembered that they bowed before the child, and said, 'Thanks be to God.' Each of the gifts, however, had a significant history, especially the thirty pennies, which appear to have assisted at all the money transactions mentioned in the Scriptures. Having been originally struck by Abraham's father, they were paid by Abraham for the cave of Machpelah; and by Potiphar for Joseph to his brethren; and by Joseph's brethren to Joseph for corn in Egypt; and by Joseph to one Queen of Sheba for ointment to anoint the body of his father Jacob; and by a later Queen of Sheba to Solomon, whence, as we have seen, they came into the hands of Melchior, who now offered them at Bethlehem.

"Nor does their history end here, for as the holy family fled into Egypt, the Virgin tied up the money with the frankincense and myrrh, together in a cloth, and dropped it by the way, and a shepherd tending his flock found the

cloth, and kept it safe till the time when Jesus was performing his miracles in Judea. Then being afflicted with a disease he came to Jerusalem, and Jesus cured him; and the shepherd offered him the cloth, but Jesus knew what was in it, and desired him to offer it upon the altar. There the Levite who ministered, burnt the frankincense; and of part of the myrrh a bitter drink was made which they gave the Saviour on the Cross; and the remainder Nicodemus presented for his burial; but the thirty pennies were made over to Judas for betraying Christ, and he threw them down in remorse at the feet of the high-priest; whereupon fifteen went to pay the soldiers who watched by the tomb, and the other fifteen bought a field to bury poor pilgrims.

"To return to the kings. After they had made their offerings they ate and drank and lay down to rest, but being warned against Herod in a dream, they returned to their own country by the regular way, and with all expedition did not reach it for two years. There they told all the people what they had seen, and the wonders God had wrought, and everywhere upon their temples the people erected the image of a star with the child and cross in it. And it came to pass that St. Thomas the Apostle was sent to preach the Word in India, and when he saw the star on their temples he was astonished, and asked what it meant. Then the heathen priests told him about the three kings,

and how they had journeyed to Bethlehem, and seen the young child; at which St. Thomas rejoiced exceedingly, for he had heard of the Magi, as they were called, from the circumstance of the twelve astrologers, and he performed so many miracles that his fame filled the three Indies.

"Now the three kings were very old and infirm, but hearing of St. Thomas they each determined to see him; and again, as it so happened, they set out on the same day, and without knowing each other's movements, reached St. Thomas at the same time. And first St. Thomas baptized them, and then he ordained them priests, for the little book adds, 'they were not married men,' and never had been. And they built a city, and lived together in great joy and love for two years, preaching the gospel. Then Melchior died and was buried in a costly grave, and shortly after Balthazar died also, and was laid in the same place; and at length Caspar gave up the ghost, and when his body was brought to be buried near his companions, Melchior and Balthazar, who lay side by side, moved asunder, and made room for him between them. And many were the wonders and miracles performed at the tomb; but for all that, the people forsook the right way, and fell into great heresies, and at length each of the three Indies insisted on taking the body of their king back to his own country.

"Now came the happy times of the good Emperor Constantine and his mother Helena, who, after finding the true cross and the four nails, and the cloth in which the child had lain, and the old blue robe of the Virgin, determined on finding the bodies of the three kings as well. For this she travelled expressly to India, where, after much difficulty, especially on behalf of Caspar, who had got among a sad set of heretics, she succeeded in obtaining all three, and when they were at length deposited again in one receptacle, there arose such an unspeakably delightful smell, as convinced all the faithful not only of the identity of the bodies, but of their exceeding satisfaction at being together once more. By Helena they were taken to Constantinople, where they lay for some time in great honor at the Church of St. Sophia; fell into discredit in the times of Julian the Apostate; rose again into favor with his successor; and were ultimately presented to Eustorgius, Bishop of Milan, a Greek by birth, who had done great service to the Greek Church.

"From Milan, Barbarossa, as we have seen, carried them off, and gave witness both of his own devotion to the church and his favor for Cologne, by presenting them to that city, where they first lay in the old Cathedral of the Bishop Hildebold, and now lie in the new one founded by Conrad of Hochsteden, where, with God's blessing, they will remain until the day of judgment."

We can, perhaps, add nothing that will more fitly close this sketch than the following little poems, which are fair illustrations of the modern efforts in honor of

The Three Holy Kings.

THE THREE KINGS.

We three kings of Orient are;
Bearing gifts we traverse afar
Field and fountain,
Moor and mountain,
Following yonder Star.

CHORUS.

O Star of wonder, Star of night,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading,
Still proceeding,
Guide us to the perfect Light.

Born a king on Bethlehem plain,
Gold I bring to crown Him again,
    King for ever,
    Ceasing never,
Over us all to reign.

Frankincense to offer have I;
Incense owns a Deity nigh:
    Prayer and praising,
    All men raising,
Worship Him God on high.

Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume
Breathes a life of gathering gloom;
    Sorrowing, sighing,
    Bleeding, dying,
Sealed in the stone-cold tomb.

Glorious now behold Him arise,
King, and God, and Sacrifice;
    Heaven singing
    Hallelujah;
Hallelujah the earth replies.

THE WISE MEN FROM THE EAST.

O'er the hill and o'er the vale
  Come three kings together,
Caring nought for snow and hail,
  Cold and wind and weather;
Now on Persia's sandy plains,
Now where Tigris swells with rains,
  They their camels tether.
Now through Syrian lands they go,
Now through Moab, faint and slow,
  Now o'er Edom's heather.

O'er the hill and o'er the vale,
  Each king bears a present;
Wise men go a Christ to hail,
  Monarchs seek a peasant;
And a Star in front proceeds,
Over rocks and rivers leads,
  Shines and beams incessant;
Therefore onward, onward still,
Ford the stream and climb the hill:
  Love makes all things pleasant.

He is God ye go to meet,
  Therefore incense proffer:
He is King ye go to greet;
  Gold is in your coffer.
Also Man, He comes to share
Every woe that man can bear —
  Tempter, Railer, Scoffer.
Therefore now, against the day,
In the grave where Him they lay,
  Myrrh ye also offer.

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